LEGACY OF KAIN
SOUL REAVER
THE DEAD SHALL RISE

LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER - THE DEAD SHALL RISE
STANDARD EDITION

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SOUL REAVER™

THE DEAD SHALL RISE

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

BIT BOT

AMIDST NOSGOTH'S FORSAKEN CRAGS, I, RAZIEL, STOOD DEFIANT, SURROUNDED BY MORTAL HUNTERS.
THEY DARED TO CHALLENGE THE MIGHT OF KAIN'S GREATEST LIEUTENANT, UNAWARE THAT THEY HAD SEALED THEIR FATE THE MOMENT THEY STEPPED INTO MY DOMINION.

NO HUNTER TO TRESPASS MY TERRITORY HAS EVER LIVED TO TELL THE TALE.

FIVE AGAINST *ONE,* VAMPIRE. IT IS YOUR TALE THAT ENDS TODAY.

WHOOOOOOSSHH

GLORY INDULGES US THIS DAY, MEN. NOT ONE BUT *THREE* VAMPIRES WILL HONOR US WITH THEIR *TRUE DEATHS!*

STAB

CRACK

SHUNK

SLASH

SLICE

GURK...

JAB

STAB

...

SLICE

DUMAH, AS EVER IT FALLS TO ME TO REMEDY YOUR INCOMPETENCE.

YOU COULD LEARN FROM YOUR BROTHER. AT LEAST *TUREL* WIELDS HIS BLADE WITH SOME SEMBLANCE OF SKILL.

CAREFUL, BROTHERS. MOCKERY SUITS THE WEAK.

HAS GLORY FINISHED *INDULGING* YOU?

GAAA...

CARVE

LATER...

WITHIN THE SHADOWED HALLS OF MY CLAN'S KEEP, BLOODIED AND VICTORIOUS, MY BROTHERS AND I SHARED A RARE MOMENT OF CAMARADERIE.

WE WERE BOUND BY THE ***BLOOD*** OF ***KAIN,*** YET DIVIDED BY DISCORD. SUCH GATHERINGS WERE FLEETING AND FRAUGHT, A STARK REMINDER OF THE FRAYED THREADS THAT WOVE US TOGETHER.

THE HUNTERS GROW ***EMBOLDENED,*** CONVINCED THEY CAN CHALLENGE OUR MASTERY OVER THIS WORLD.

THEY MIGHT HAVE KILLED YOU, RAZIEL, HAD TUREL AND I NOT INTERVENED.

RAZIEL DISPATCHED ***TWO*** OF THE WRETCHES WITH EASE. IT WAS ***YOU, DUMAH,*** WHO NEEDED RESCUING. ***BY MY HAND!***

I WOULD HAVE SLAIN THEM ***ALL MYSELF.***

WHY DID YOU COME, BROTHERS?

THE SCENT OF ***BLOODSHED...*** I COULD NOT RESIST ITS ALLURE.

FOR THREE NIGHTS WE TRACKED THEM. WE SOUGHT THEIR LAIR, THEIR PLANS, THEIR TRUE STRENGTH.

WE SUSPECT THEY BELONG TO A GROWING RABBLE STIRRING UNREST IN THE SOUTH-LANDS.

AND YOU SOUGHT TO LAY THIS REVELATION AT KAIN'S FEET. TO EARN HIS ***FAVOR,*** TO BASK IN HIS PRAISE.

KAIN'S FAVOR HAS GROWN ***RARE.***

INDEED IT HAS.

THE HUNTERS LIE DEAD. THEIR TRAIL HAS GONE COLD.

A TRIVIAL MATTER. WE WILL ***FEAST*** UPON THEIR FELLOWS SOON ENOUGH.

SIIP

TO ***DEAD*** HUNTERS!

GULP

GULP

THUD THUD THUD

HOW DID I NOT SENSE A VISITOR'S APPROACH?

AH! THE SCENT RETURNS... THE MUSK OF BLOOD YEARNING TO BE SPILLED.

SNNKT

CREEEAK

GREETINGS, RAZIEL.

A VAMPIRE, BEARING A REGAL GROWTH UPON HER BROW? YET HERS WAS UNLIKE KAIN'S. SHE BORE ***NO*** MARK OF MY MASTER'S PROGENY.

IDENTIFY YOURSELF OR ***PERISH.***

I MUST SPEAK TO YOU, RAZIEL. IN ***SECLUSION.***

NAME YOUR CLAN, ***VAMPIRE!***

STATE YOUR ***PURPOSE*** HERE.

WHO ARE YOU?

INVITE ME INSIDE AND I SHALL EXPLAIN...

...BUT TO ***YOU*** ALONE.

YOU ***DARE*** ATTEMPT TO BARTER YOUR WAY ACROSS MY THRESHOLD? I TRADE FREELY ***NEITHER*** MY TIME NOR MY HOSPITALITY.

YOUR MAKER SHOULD HAVE INSTILLED IN YOU SOME SEMBLANCE OF ***MANNERS!***

WHOOOOOSH

CLANG

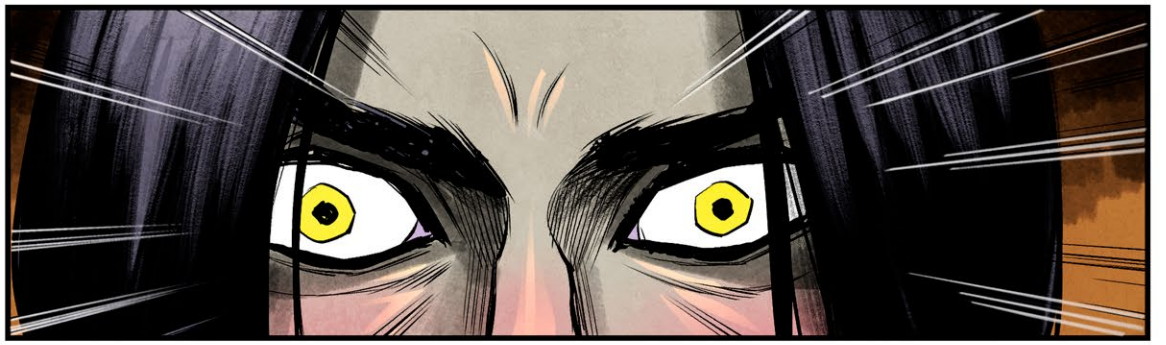
YOU FIGHT WELL.

DO TRY TO KEEP UP.

AH, THE HEADSTRONG ***ARROGANCE*** OF YOUTH. I'VE ENDURED MANY MILLENNIA, YET YOU... BARELY A THOUSAND YEARS.

SLAP

ARGH!



GIVE ME YOUR NAME.

I AM KAIN'S MOST FORMIDABLE LIEUTENANT, HIS FAVORED SON. THAT STRIKE COULD HAVE ***ENDED*** ME. ***HOW DID YOU...?***

I AM ***LADY ELALETH*** OF ***THORNLACH.***

YOU ***UNDER-ESTIMATED*** ME, RAZIEL. AN ERROR YOU'LL ***NOT*** MAKE NEXT TIME.

NEXT TIME?

WHEN I STRUCK YOU, WHAT DID YOU SEE?

SHIMMER

RAVENS... FLYING... BLUE SKY...

IT BEGINS. YOU ARE, AS YOU SAY, A FORMIDABLE VAMPIRE. BUT DESTINY HAS YOU MARKED FOR ***GREATER ASPIRATIONS.***

BY THE PILLARS...

WINGS!

AS YOUR POWERS BURGEON, AS YOU EVOLVE, REMNANTS OF YOUR MORTAL PAST WILL RESURFACE. AND WHEN THEY DO, YOU WILL GIVE ME WHAT I DESIRE...

THE HEART OF DARKNESS.

WHOOSH

IN THE MOONLIT SILENCE, I STOOD SPELLBOUND. THIS STRANGER ***SHATTERED*** MY UNDERSTANDING OF OUR KIND. HER WORDS LINGERED, A PROPHECY HINTING AT POWERS YET TO AWAKEN WITHIN ME.

AND A DESTINY INTERTWINED WITH THE ***HEART*** OF ***DARKNESS...***

UNTIL NEXT TIME, ***RAZIEL!***

LATER...

A VAMPIRE WITH WINGS...

A PRIVILEGE DENIED EVEN TO KAIN.

WHAT DARK FORCE SHAPED HER MAJESTY?

WHY DOES SHE SEEK THE HEART OF DARKNESS?

HOW AM I BOUND TO THE FATE OF *JANOS AUDRON?*

WINGS...

CONCEITS OF MYTH. OF LEGEND.

OF MADNESS.

AS THE AMULET'S EYE OPENED, IT DREW ME INTO A VISION... AN ECHO FROM A PAST THAT AT FIRST, I DID NOT RECOGNIZE. MEMORIES OF A LIFE ERASED WERE NOW LAID BARE BEFORE ME.

WAS THIS SOME ANCIENT SORCERY? A SPELL WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC OF MY BEING, PULLING AT THE THREADS OF A LIFE I HAD LONG FORGOTTEN? IT WAS AS IF THE AMULET HELD DOMINION OVER MY MIND.

AS I STOOD CAUGHT IN ITS THRALL, I WONDERED... WHAT OTHER SECRETS DID THIS CURSED ARTIFACT HOLD?

MONSTER! I *BANISH* YOU TO THE *SHADOWS!*

WHACK

NOT SO FAST! I SHALL *RULE THIS WORLD* AND *ALL* WHO DWELL *HERE!*

THUNK

THWACK

CAN *I* PLAY?

YOU'RE TOO LITTLE TO PLAY WITH SWORDS. YOU'LL GET ***HURT.*** MOTHER AND FATHER WOULD SCOLD ME IF--

LET ***LADY ELALETH*** TRY, RAZIEL.

SHE, TOO, MUST LEARN TO DEFEND HERSELF. WHAT IF VAMPIRES STRIKE HERE?

VAMPIRES WON'T ATTACK THORNLACH. WE'RE ***FAR*** FROM THEIR TERRITORIES. WHAT WOULD THEY WANT WITH OUR POOR VILLAGE?

MY FATHER SAYS THEY TOOK WOLLSTAHL LAST MOON. THIRD VILLAGE SINCE HARVEST, AND MORE LEFT DEAD THAN ALIVE.

HE'S STRUGGLING TO FORGE ENOUGH SWORDS AND DAGGERS. FEAR IS SPREADING ALONG THE VALLEY.

AN ANGEL!

THANK YOU, ***MATHIAS.***

MY FATHER SAYS IF WE ARE ATTACKED, THE SARAFAN WILL PROTECT US. THE SARAFAN ARE MIGHTY AND HAVE SWORN TO PURGE NOSGOTH OF THE VAMPIRE SCOURGE.

MY FATHER SAYS THE SARAFAN ARE REDUCED AND BEGGARED. HE SAYS THAT WE'RE FAR FROM THEIR OUTPOST AND BEYOND THEIR CONCERN.

HE SAYS THAT WE CAN RELY ON ***NO ONE*** TO SAVE US BUT ***OURSELVES.***

MONSTER! I BANISH YOU TO THE ***DEMON REALM!***

I WILL DEFEAT YOU, ***SISTER.***

AARRRGGHH!

=SIGH=

FINE. BUT DON'T LET ELALETH HEAR ANY OF THAT. DON'T FRIGHTEN HER.

DO YOU WANT TO BE A ***DEMON*** LIKE ***RAZIEL*** OR ***AN ANGEL*** LIKE ***ME?***

NOT SO FAST! I SHALL ***RULE*** THIS WORLD AND ALL WHO--

THUMP

HA!

THUD

NOOOOO! YOU HAVE BESTED ME, CURSED ANGEL!

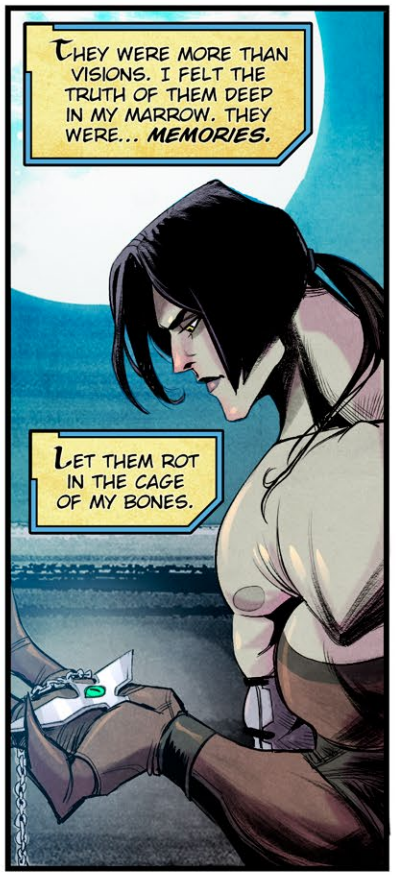
GURGLE GAAAGGGG GAAAH!

YOU DID IT, ELALETH! YOU SAVED OUR REALM FROM ETERNAL DARKNESS!

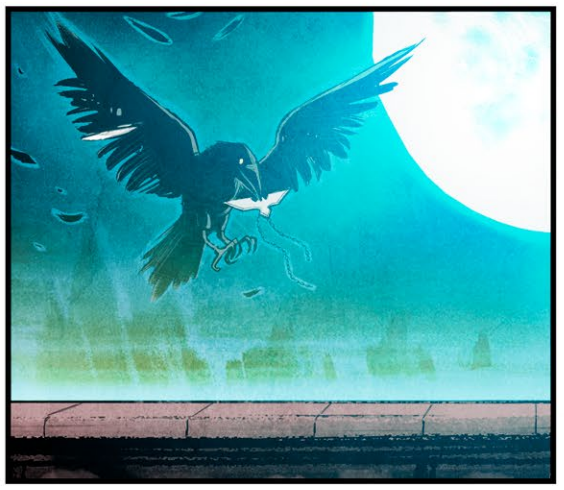
A SPECTER FROM THE ABYSS APPEARED, AN OMINOUS HARBINGER OF DESTINY. IT LOOMED OVER MY CHILDHOOD SELF, WHISPERING PROMISES OF A FUTURE LADEN WITH SIGNIFICANCE.

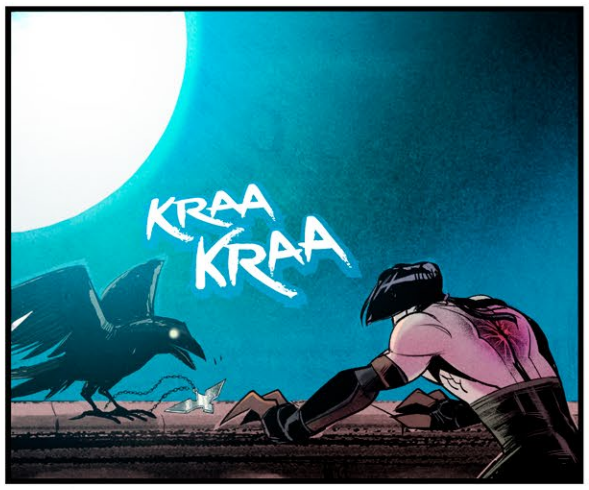
A BLADE OF TRUE POWER BECKONS TO YOU, CHILD. ONCE IT IS IN YOUR GRASP, FATE SHALL BE YOURS TO MOLD, AND NONE SHALL STAND AGAINST YOU.

DID YOU SEE IT?
SEE WHAT?
THE VISIONS OF THE PAST RECEDED.


THEY WERE MORE THAN VISIONS. I FELT THE TRUTH OF THEM DEEP IN MY MARROW. THEY WERE... MEMORIES.
LET THEM ROT IN THE CAGE OF MY BONES.

WHOOOOSH




KRAA KRAA

KRAA

I WANT NONE OF THIS. TAKE IT AWAY!

MEMORIES ARE A SECOND HUNGER.
KRAA

DO YOU HEAR ME, ELALETH? I SERVE ONLY KAIN... AND BLOOD!

STOP! I COMMAND YOU! DEPART!

PLAGUE ME NO MORE, PHANTOMS!

KRAA

MY SIGHT... STOLEN...

MY SINEWS... BOUND...

HOURS TURNED TO DAYS...

...DAYS TO NIGHTS.

TIME WORE ON, UNYIELDING...

...AS I LAY ENSNARED IN THIS SPECTRAL COCOON.

GASP!

RRRIIPP

WHOOOOSH

CRACK SNAP

ARGGHHH!!

TEEAHRR

KRAA

AAAAR

RRRGGGHH

I EMERGED REMADE, MY WINGS A DARK MOCKERY OF ELALETH'S LIGHT... MORE DEMON THAN DIVINE. THEIR PURPOSE, AN ENIGMA.

LATER...

SOON AFTER I EMERGED, REBORN FOR THE SECOND TIME, I FOLLOWED THE TRACE ECHOES OF MY SISTER'S PRESENCE TO THIS DESOLATE PLACE.

MY SISTER. WHAT A BALM IT'D BE TO DISMISS THE WRETCHED AMULET'S REVELATIONS AS ILLUSION RATHER THAN A TRUE GLIMPSE OF...

...MY HUMAN PAST.

SHE IS NEAR. SHE HAS BEEN WAITING FOR ME.

GREETINGS, BROTHER.

DID YOU BRING THE ***HEART OF DARKNESS?***

THE HEART IS A RELIC ***LOST*** TO TIME. ***WHY*** DO YOU BELIEVE ***I*** POSSESS IT?

I BELIEVE YOU CAN ***OBTAIN IT.*** I BELIEVE YOU WILL.

AFTER ALL, YOU OWE ME AT LEAST ***ONE*** KINDNESS.

I OWE YOU ***NOTHING.***

YOU WILL REMEMBER SOON ENOUGH WHAT YOU DID TO EARN MY MALICE, AND YOU ***WILL*** ATONE.

SPEAK PLAINLY, SISTER.

DID YOU KNOW, RAZIEL, THAT IT WAS ***I*** WHO AIDED KAIN IN ***RESURRECT-ING*** YOU?

LIES! HOW COULD YOU HAVE ORCHESTRATED ***SUCH*** A ***THING?***

THE AMULET WILL SHOW YOU SOON ENOUGH.

TELL ME, WHAT OTHER ***TRUTHS*** HAS IT REVEALED?

A BOY. MATHIAS.

SPEAK THAT NAME WITH GREATER CARE, ***BROTHER.*** WHAT ***ELSE*** DID YOU REMEMBER?

"WE WERE CHILDREN, PLAYING A HOLY WAR. WOODEN BLADES... ANGELS..."

"...AND DEMONS."

A WORD OF COUNSEL, BROTHER. DO NOT SPEAK TO KAIN OF YOUR WINGS.

KAIN IS A ***MASTER,*** NOT A TEACHER. HE SEEKS TO TEMPER HIS LIEUTENANTS... TO ***FORGE*** THEM AS SERVANTS, NOT CHALLENGERS. HIS JEALOUSY IS ***BOUNDLESS,*** AND HIS AMBITION KNOWS ***NO LIMIT.***

DO NOT FEIGN SURPRISE.

I ***KNEW*** THAT YOU WOULD TRANSCEND... AS I HAVE TRANSCENDED.

THE AMULET AND ITS MAGIC HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ***YOURS.*** I HAVE MERELY BEEN THEIR KEEPER, THESE MANY CENTURIES...

THERE IS ***MAGIC*** IN MEMORY. TRANSCENDENCE CANNOT HAPPEN WITHOUT ITS EMBRACE.

DO YOU TRULY THINK I EMBRACE THE FRAILTY AND FUTILITY OF MORTAL LIFE? I DESIRE ONLY TO SERVE KAIN, ***IN STRENGTH,*** AS I HAVE FOR A MILLENNIUM.

THE DOOR TO YOUR PAST HAS OPENED AND CAN NEVER BE CLOSED.

YOU WILL RECALL THE LOCATION OF THE HEART OF DARKNESS, AND YOU WILL DELIVER IT ***TO ME.***

SHINK

YOU ***DO NOT*** COMMAND ME!

ANOTHER VISION BESIEGED ME. MEMORIES MATERIALIZED AS THOUGH FROM BEYOND A MIST AT DAWN.

ELALETH! HELP!

ITS WING IS ***BROKEN!***

IS THAT ALL? YOU FRIGHTENED ME, RAZIEL. I LOATHE WHEN YOU EXPLORE THE FOREST ALONE. ARE YOU NOT SCARED OF ***VAMPIRES?***

MORE THAN TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THEY LAST STALKED THIS VALLEY. WE ARE SAFE...

...BUT ILL LUCK HAS BEFALLEN THIS POOR CREATURE.

THERE IS NOTHING TO BE DONE, RAZIEL. THIS WILL BE A KINDNESS...

NO! I WILL SEE IT FLY AGAIN, WHATEVER THE COST.

I RECALL NOW HOW DAYS PASSED IN QUIET DEDICATION.

EACH MOMENT WAS A STEP TOWARD TRUST.

WE SOON ENJOYED AN UNLIKELY COMPANIONSHIP.

WEEKS PASSED, MARKING THE MENDING OF BONES, A CYCLE OF MOLTING.

AT LAST, IT WAS TIME.

THREE DAYS HAVE PASSED. IT WILL NOT RETURN TO YOU, RAZIEL. YOU MEANT NOTHING TO IT.

SEE? FAITH IS REWARDED!

WHAT...?

KRAA KRAA

FAREWELL, FRIEND.

REMARKABLE!

BUT WHAT *MEANING* LIES IN THIS?

I WANT *YOU* TO HAVE IT.

LET IT SERVE AS A REMINDER TO BOTH OF US... TO SHOW KINDNESS TO THOSE IN NEED, TO AID THOSE IN PERIL, AND... *NEVER* TO *LOSE HOPE.*

TELL ME.

WHAT *TRIALS* HAVE YOU ENDURED, SISTER? AND WHY REVEAL YOURSELF TO ME ONLY NOW, AFTER A THOUSAND YEARS?

TK-TK-TK-THNK

CLICK-CLUNK-CHNK

SINCE LAST I SAW YOU, RAZIEL, I HAVE BEEN LOST IN TIME...

...CURSED BY *MOEBIUS* THE TIME STREAMER TO SLIP WITHOUT WARNING, WITHOUT INFLUENCE...

...IN AND OUT OF THE *STREAM OF TIME.*

TIME IS MORE THAN A RIVER. IT IS A FATHOMLESS LOCH... A FETID MARSH... A DEEP WELL... A THUNDERING FALLS AND A VAST, BLACK OCEAN SO UNIMAGINABLY COLD... SO UNIMAGINABLY *LONELY.*

CLIK CLIK-VWORP

TIME IS BOTH WICKED AND INDIFFERENT. IT TUMBLES YOU ONE INSTANT LIKE A LEAF IN A GALE AND ENTOMBS YOU THE NEXT LIKE A SPIDER IN AMBER.

ONLY *RECENTLY* DID I ESCAPE THIS CURSE AND FIND MY WAY TO YOU.

YOU FOUND YOUR WAY TO ME TO DEMAND WHAT I ***CANNOT*** PROVIDE. WHY DO YOU SEEK THE HEART OF DARKNESS?

DO YOU BELIEVE IT WILL ***RESTORE*** YOUR HUMANITY?

HAHAHA

CONSULT THE AMULET. IT HAS BORNE WITNESS TO MY LIFE. IT UNDERSTANDS ME... PERHAPS ***BETTER*** THAN I UNDERSTAND MYSELF.

IT WILL HELP YOU APPREHEND YOURSELF AS WELL.

TK TK

ZZZKRK

TK

TK

SOON ENOUGH, YOU WILL RECALL THE LOCATION OF THE HEART OF DARKNESS. SYMPATHY FOR ME WILL ACCOMPANY THE RECOLLECTION AND COMMIT YOU TO THE PROPER COURSE. ONLY ***THEN*** WILL OUR BUSINESS BE CONCLUDED.

LATER...

THE SANCTUARY OF THE CLANS.

I HEEDED MY SISTER'S COUNSEL, CONCEALING MY WINGS AND HIDING MY TRUE NATURE FROM KAIN.

ONE MUST GRANT MEN HAVE A GENIUS FOR DEVISING METHODS OF INFLICTING ***PAIN*** AND ***SUFFERING*** AND ***DEATH.***

YOU SUMMONED ME, KAIN?

YOUR BROTHERS REPORT THAT THE HUNTERS IN THE SOUTHLANDS ARE JOINING FORCES. ***PREPARING.***

IT IS OF ***NO*** CONSEQUENCE.

HUNTERS ARE EASILY DISPATCHED. SURELY TUREL AND DUMAH INFORMED YOU OF HOW EFFORTLESSLY THE THREE OF US--

THE HUNTERS DO ***NOT*** CONCERN ME, ***RAZIEL!***

WHAT CONCERNS ME IS THAT FOR A FORTNIGHT, ***YOU*** HAVE NOT HEEDED MY SUMMONS.

WHAT CONCERNS ME IS THAT YOU HOSTED A VAMPIRE UNKNOWN TO YOUR BROTHERS ***WITHOUT*** MY KNOWLEDGE.

WHAT CONCERNS ME IS YOUR ***GROWING HOARD*** OF ***SECRETS.***

COME CLOSER, RAZIEL.

A NEW CLOAK, I SEE, AND A FINE ONE AT THAT.

VANITY IS UNBECOMING.

I DID RECEIVE A VISITOR, BUT I DID NOT THINK HER IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO REPORT.

HER?

WHO WAS SHE?

SHE CLAIMED SHE... WAS ONCE MY SISTER.

YOU BELIEVED HER?

SHE SHOWED ME.

AMUSE ME. DESCRIBE HER CATALOG OF ***LIES.***

I EXPERIENCED MEMORIES. OF MY HUMAN PAST.

THIS SISTER OF YOURS HAS CLOUDED YOUR JUDGEMENT.

YOU ARE DECEIVED, RAZIEL. YOU ARE ***TOO TRUSTING.***

TOO TRUSTING?

YOU HAVE SUCCUMBED TO A MENTALIST. MAD AS NUPRAPTOR. YOU HAVE ***ALLOWED*** A STRANGER TO ROOT THROUGH YOUR MIND LIKE A STOAT NOSING THROUGH REFUSE.

SCRE-ESH

HOW I WOULD PREFER THE COMFORTS OF SUCH A ***FANTASY.***

KAIN IS LYING. BUT WHY WOULD HE DENY ***ALL*** KNOWLEDGE OF MY SISTER?

CAN IT BE EVEN KAIN HAS FEARS?

TELL ME, RAZIEL. WHAT DID THIS CHARLATAN ASK OF YOU?

I MUST SPEAK THE TRUTH, FOR HE KNOWS MORE THAN HE WOULD ADMIT.

SHE *DEMANDED* THAT I BRING HER THE HEART OF DARKNESS.

CLANK

CLING

ARRGGHH!

CLANG

BY THE PILLARS! WHAT *SIGNIFICANCE* DOES THE HEART OF DARKNESS HOLD FOR HIM TO PROVOKE SUCH *RAGE?*

THE NEXT TIME YOU ENCOUNTER THIS *DECEIVER,* YOU WILL *BRING ME HER HEAD.*

THE *WEIGHT* OF KAIN'S FURY LIFTED FROM MY SHOULDERS, YET THE WEIGHT OF MY WINGS STILL BURDENED ME. I HAD SUCCEEDED IN CONCEALING THIS CHANGE FROM MY MASTER..

...FOR NOW.

KAIN SCOLDED ME FOR KEEPING SECRETS, YET HIS OWN MULTIPLY, AND MY TROUBLES WITH THEM.

ELALETH'S ARRIVAL AT MY DOORSTEP WAS NO SURPRISE TO HIM.

AND MY OWN TOLERANCE FOR SURPRISE HAS REACHED ITS END.

YOU UNDERSTAND ELALETH MORE PROFOUNDLY THAN SHE UNDERSTANDS HERSELF.

UNVEIL THE SOURCE OF HER *MALICE. REVEAL* THE DEBT SHE BELIEVES I OWE HER.

TINK

YOU TOIL LATE THIS EVENING, MATHIAS. I HOPE I HAVE NOT MISTAKEN THE HOUR.

YOU ARE NOT MISTAKEN. I WAS ENSNARED BY MY WORK...TO FINISH THIS.

DID YOU MAKE THAT?

I DID.

DO NOT TELL YOUR FATHER I SAID SO, BUT I BELIEVE THE SKILL OF THE APPRENTICE HAS ***SURPASSED*** THAT OF THE MASTER. IT IS ***EXQUISITE.***

I MADE THIS SWORD FOR YOU, ***M'LADY.***

WHAT HAVE I DONE TO ***DESERVE*** SUCH A ***TREASURE?***

ELALETH, ***I LOVE YOU.*** I HAVE LOVED YOU SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN, AND AS WE GREW, ***SO TOO*** DID MY LOVE FOR ***YOU.***

I'M A COMMONER. I HAVE NO LAND, NO TITLE, NO WEALTH. ALL I HAVE IS ***MY HONOR,*** MY SKILL WITH FIRE AND STEEL, AND MY WISH TO SEE YOU ***HAPPY.***

ELALETH... I WOULD MAKE YOU MY BRIDE IF YOU WOULD ***HAVE ME.***

MATHIAS, I ***TOO*** HAVE LOVED YOU ALL MY LIFE, AND I WILL LOVE YOU UNTIL DEATH PARTS US.

I SHALL BE ***HONORED*** TO TAKE YOU AS MY HUSBAND!

IF I HAD DARED HOPE, I'D HAVE FORGED YOU A RING. A RING OF SUCH ***BEAUTY!*** BUT FOR NOW, THE SWORD--

--IS A ***SECRET*** BETWEEN US, A SYMBOL OF OUR INTENTION.

INDEED. IN TRUTH, I FEAR YOUR FATHER'S WRATH. YOU ARE A ***LADY OF THORNLACH,*** AND I AM BUT A MERE BLACKSMITH.

MY FATHER WILL RAISE YOU TO THE GENTRY AND DECLARE US A SUITABLE MATCH. IT IS NOT MY PARENTS WHO SHOULD CONCERN YOU.

RAZIEL HAS ALWAYS BEEN SO ***PROTECTIVE*** OF YOU.

THE HEIR APPARENT TO THE LORD OF THORNLACH WILL HAVE A SAY IN THIS.

NO MATTER. IF HE OBJECTS, I WILL CHALLENGE HIM TO A DUEL. I'VE BESTED MY BROTHER BEFORE, EVEN IF ONLY WITH A WOODEN BLADE. BUT WITH THIS AS MY WEAPON...

VAMPIRES!

SLICE

ELALETH! MATHIAS!

CLANG

ARGHHH!

SHANK

MATHIAS? MATHIAS?!

THE AMULET'S VISION WAS RELENTLESS, COLD AND UNSYMPATHETIC. IT TOUCHED A HUMAN PULSE SLUMBERING WITHIN A VAMPIRE'S DORMANT HEART.

MOTHER! FATHER!

KAIN, THE MASTER TO WHOM I HAD SWORN UNDYING ALLEGIANCE, SLEW WITH ABANDON. HIS VIOLENCE WAS... PERFECT.

LET THEM GO! LEAVE THIS PLACE, CREATURE!

AH! THE YOUNG SCION OF THORN-LACH.

WHY HAVE YOU COME HERE, VAMPIRE? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

TO SET YOU ON THE PATH DESTINY HAS LAID BEFORE YOU.

NO. PLEASE.

SLASH!

NO.

CRACK

WE ARE SAVED!

THE SARAFAN HAVE ARRIVED!

THANKS BE TO THE GODS!

RIGHT ON TIME.

BEGONE, LITTLE LORD. THORNLACH HOLDS NAUGHT FOR YOU. JOIN THE SARAFAN LEGENDS OF YOUR YOUTH AND RIDE FORTH TO GLORY AND RENOWN.

DESTROY THE VAMPIRE HORDE!

STAB

SLASH

CLANG

CLAW

SPURT

MATHIAS! WHERE ARE YOU?

MATHIAS!

HIIssss

I AM NO WRETCHED THING! I AM VODALUS...

VAMPIRE!

I AM SOMETHING MORE... AND SOMETHING LESS. OLDER THAN NAMES, OLDER THAN THE HUNGER HE WILL COME TO KNOW.

WRETCHED THING!

YOU HAVE INFECTED MATHIAS!

A TRIBUTE SACRIFICED AT MY SHORES. I TOOK ONLY A TASTE.

IN EXCHANGE, I BESTOWED UPON HIM A VAMPIRIC GIFT...

ELALETH... I AM SORRY... IT'S...

IT'S TOO LATE.

I WILL NOT LET YOU DIE.

I AM NOT DYING. I AM CHANGING.

I KNOW LITTLE OF VAMPIRES.

AND LESS STILL OF THAT ABOMINATION.

BUT I DO KNOW THAT THEY MUST...

...FEED.

SLURP

PERHAPS THIS WILL HELP YOU GAIN STRENGTH TO FIGHT THE INFECTION!

GASP!

NO, RAZIEL! IT IS *NOT* WHAT IT SEEMS!

MATHIAS... *UNDEAD,* AND DRAINING THE LIFE OF *MY SISTER!*

HE REQUIRES STRENGTH TO FIGHT THE INFECTION! HE WILL SURVIVE THIS! HE MUST!

SLLLT

PLAP

AAAGGHH!

YOU ARE NAÏVE, ELALETH.

DID YOU NOT WITNESS THE *DESTRUCTION* OF OUR VILLAGE?

THE *MURDER* OF OUR PARENTS?

HE WILL SEEK OUR ENDS, UNLESS...

TAKE MY *HEAD* AS WELL, RAZIEL! *TAKE IT!*

IT IS MY HOPE THAT YOUR HAND WILL BE ENOUGH... THAT PERHAPS I SEVERED THE BLIGHT BEFORE IT CREPT TOWARD YOUR *HEART!*

THAT IS A FOOLISH HOPE.

YOU HAVE ALREADY TAKEN EVERY-THING FROM ME. GRANT ME THE SAME QUICK DEATH YOU GIFTED MATHIAS.

I CANNOT.

THUNK

THE SARAFAN DRUMS. THEY ARE PREPARING TO RIDE. I *MUST* GO.

BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM

HOW MUCH OF YOUR BLOOD DID MATHIAS DRINK?

AND HOW MUCH OF YOUR BLOOD DID I SPILL?

YOUR HEART NO LONGER BEATS, SISTER...

BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM

BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM

I WILL CLEANSE THIS WORLD OF VAMPIRES.

TO THINK I HAD DECLARED MY INTENT TO BECOME LORD OF THORNLACH...

HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE VAMPIRES' ATTACK, I MIGHT HAVE LIVED A CONTENTED, INSIGNIFICANT LIFE.

I CAN WITHSTAND NO MORE.

MY STRENGTH HAS LEFT ME.

I MUST *FEED.*

THE AMULET... IT CALLS ME BACK...

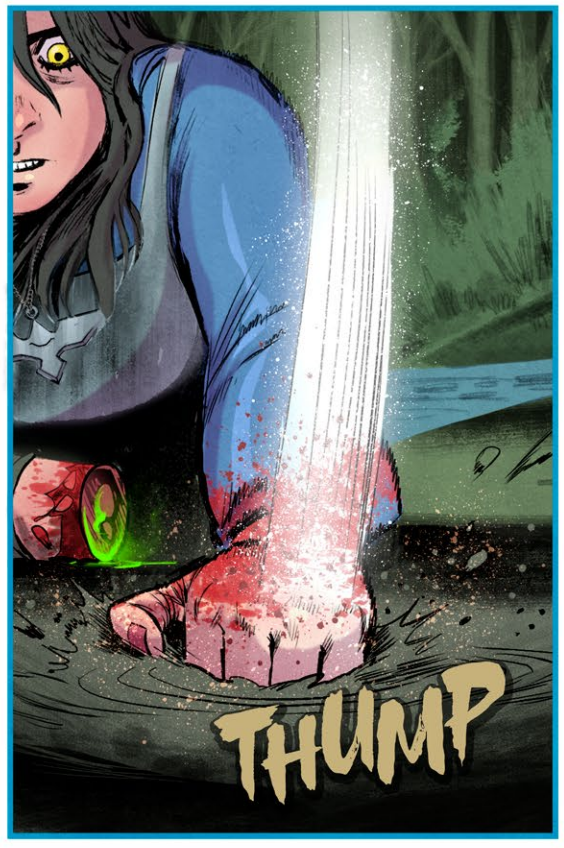
MEMORY IS AN OUROBORIC HUNGER. IS IT THE PRESENT THAT FEEDS ON THE PAST...

OR DOES THE PAST FEED ON THE *PRESENT?*

BY THE BLOOD OF MY FATHER, MY MOTHER, AND ALL WHO PERISHED ON THIS CURSED DAY, I WILL *AVENGE* YOU.
I WILL FOLLOW RAZIEL TO THE ENDS OF NOSGOTH...
...THROUGH WHATEVER REALMS LIE BEYOND...
...AND I WILL MAKE HIM *PAY.*

GASP

I AWAKEN FROM DEATH, ONLY TO MOURN YOU ANEW.


THUMP

SCHRRRK

SCHRRRK

LADY ELALETH, ARE YOU--?

SHE'S NOT WELL. ***YELLOW EYES!***

SHE IS... SHE IS ONE OF ***THEM!***

YOU ARE THE LADY OF THORNLACH NO MORE. ***LEAVE THIS PLACE, VAMPIRE!***

MOTHER... FATHER...

SCHRRRK

FOR THREE DAYS, LOST IN DELIRIUM, MY SISTER WANDERED.

SHE HAD NEVER VENTURED BEYOND THORNLACH AND HAD NO SENSE OF HER DESTINATION...

OR DESTINY.

YET SHE MOVED WITH PURPOSE, AS IF INSTINCT GUIDED HER... A PREDATOR DRAWN TO AN UNSEEN SCENT.

KRAA

HER HUNGER FOR REVENGE WAS STRONGER THAN HER THIRST FOR BLOOD. BUT HER STRENGTH HAD WANED.

HER WILL, IRONCLAD AS IT WAS, COULD NO LONGER FORESTALL HER FATE.

THREE DAYS PASSED.

ONCE SHE SURRENDERED TO DESTINY, SHE AWOKE TRANSFORMED.

AND FAMISHED.

IT'S YOU.

CHOMP SLURP

DID YOU BRING ME THIS?

YOU MUST BRING ME *MORE!*

KRAA

KRAA KRAA

DO YOU WISH ME TO *FOLLOW* YOU?

LATER...

LEAD THE WAY, *RAVEN!*

KRAA

KRAA

HAD RAZIEL NOT CHOSEN TO SAVE YOU ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, I WOULD HAVE CUT YOUR THROAT!

WILL YOU TRICK ME INTO CUTTING MINE?

IF THE RAVEN WISHED ME HARM, ***WHY*** WOULD IT HAVE FED ME?

=SIGH=

HELLO?

HAIL!

WHO'S THERE?

I SHALL ASK THE QUESTIONS, *TRESPASSER!*

WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU?
I AM YOUR ONLY HOPE OF ESCAPING MY WOODS ALIVE. TELL ME... *HOW* DID YOU FIND YOUR WAY IN?
I WAS *INVITED.*
AH! SO YOU WERE.
A VAMPIRE IN MY WOODS. AND NOT JUST ANY VAMPIRE. FATE CERTAINLY PLAYS CUNNING TRICKS!
WELL DONE, MY FRIEND.
KRAA
YOU ARE *NOT AFRAID* OF... WHAT I AM?
COME, *VAMPIRE.* LET US SEE WHAT MIGHT BE DONE ABOUT YOUR HAND.
BE SWIFT. THE SOONER I TEND TO YOUR INJURY, THE SOONER I CAN PART THE MIST AND SEE YOU OUT OF *MY WOODS.*
TELL ME YOUR NAME.
I AM *KY'SET'SYK.*
KY...
IF YOU WISH. AND YOU ARE *LADY ELALETH* OF *THORNLACH.*
HOW DID YOU--?
MY RAVENS TELL ME MANY THINGS. THIS ONE *BEFRIENDED* YOUR BROTHER, RAZIEL. MY EYES MERELY CONFIRM EVERYTHING THE RAVEN HAS ALREADY TOLD ME. THE ATTACK ON YOUR VILLAGE. YOUR LOST LOVE. YOUR NEW *HUNGER.*
COME. TIME PASSES DIFFERENTLY HERE IN THE MIST. I SUGGEST YOU CEASE WASTING IT.
SIT.
THE FLESH IS MINE...

BUT THE ***BLOOD*** IS ALL YOURS.

GAIN YOUR STRENGTH. WE HAVE ***MUCH*** TO DISCUSS.

SLURP

BUT ALAS, YOUR BROTHER CHOSE THE SARAFAN PATH.

AND FATE HAS DELIVERED YOU TO MY DOOR. THEREFORE, YOU AND I ***MUST*** BARGAIN.

YOUR HOSPITALITY WAS OFFERED FREELY.

I ***NEVER*** AGREED TO BARGAIN WITH YOU.

WHY ARE YOU AIDING ME? WHAT DO YOU ***WANT*** IN ***RETURN?***

CLUNK

I MUST ADMIT, IT WAS RAZIEL I WAS HOPING WOULD COME TO ME.

THE ***TRINKET*** HANGING AROUND YOUR NECK WAS FASHIONED FOR HIM, AFTER ALL.

YET BARGAIN YOU WILL, OR I WILL TURN YOU OUT TO WANDER THE MIST FOR ALL ***ETERNITY.***

SIT. DOWN.

FIRST YOU SAY YOU WANT TO SEE ME OUT OF YOUR WOODS, THEN YOU THREATEN TO ENTRAP ME WITHIN. WHICH IS IT?

FOR THE LAST TIME, ***WHAT*** IS YOUR WILL OF ME?

THIS REVELATION CONFOUNDED ME. I HAD NEVER MET THIS HERMIT, THIS BEAST, NOR ANYTHING LIKE HIM.

YET NOT ONLY DID HE KNOW ME, HE AWAITED ME.

WHAT OTHER POWERS DID THE AMULET HOLD?

HOW MANY DESTINIES WERE ALTERED BECAUSE I FAILED TO RECOGNIZE A GIFT MEANT FOR ME ALONE?

I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND ***WHO*** I AM...

WHO I WAS...

AND WHO I WILL BE...

"THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, I WAS NOT THE BEAST YOU SEE BEFORE YOU NOW. I WAS A MAN."

"A MAN ***CURSED.***"

"CURSED TO WALK THE WORLD AS A ***HALF-HYLDEN ABOMINATION.*** CURSED FOR ONE FOOLISH ACT THAT HAS RULED MY DESTINY EVER SINCE."

"DID YOU STUDY NOSGOTH'S VAMPIRIC HISTORY, CHILD? IN ANCIENT TIMES, YOUR KIND CAST MINE INTO THE ***DEMON REALM.***"

"BUT I, BEING NEITHER FULLY MAN NOR FULLY HYLDEN, WAS TORN ASUNDER BY THE SAVAGE SORCERY OF THIS BANISHMENT. CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO WORLDS. THESE WOODS STRADDLE THE ***SCHISM*** BETWEEN DEMON AND FLESH. AND I AM A SPIDER TRAVERSING A WEB NOT OF ITS OWN DEVISING."

"IN A CRUEL TURN OF DESTINY, MY HUMAN HALF WAS SENT BELOW, AND MY HYLDEN HALF WAS LEFT BEHIND."

"HERE I REMAIN, CONSTRAINED BY TETHERS OF MIST."

"BUT AS YOU NOW SEE, I CAN ENTERTAIN GUESTS."

YOU ARE NOT THE FIRST TO ANSWER MY INVITATION, THOUGH IT HAS BEEN AN AGE SINCE ANY DARED. ONCE, OTHERS CALLED THESE WOODS THEIR HOME AS WELL. ONE OF THEM YOU'VE ***ALREADY*** ENCOUNTERED. HE NOW FAVORS THE SWAMPS OF THORNLACH OVER THESE LANDS.

KRAA

IS THAT WHY YOU THREATENED TO KEEP ME HERE? BECAUSE YOU SEEK ***COMPANIONSHIP?***

BECAUSE I HAVE DEVISED A PLAN... ONE THAT NOW IRREVOCABLY INCLUDES ***YOU.***

I HAVE TOLD YOU MY STORY. NOW TELL ME YOURS. YOU HAVE WANDERED FAR FROM HOME. WHERE WERE YOU GOING?

WHAT DO YOU SEEK?

RAZIEL IS A ***MURDERER.*** I WILL BRING HIM TO JUSTICE.

RAZIEL IS ***SARAFAN*** NOW! YOU WOULD STAND ALONE AGAINST AN ARMY WHOSE MOST FINELY HONED SKILL IS THE ***DESTRUCTION*** OF VAMPIRES?

NO. NO... I...

WE WERE TAUGHT TALES OF...NINE PILLARS, AND GUARDIANS WHO...

GUARDIANS WHO WHAT?

WHO, PERHAPS IF I ASKED THEM, MIGHT...HELP ME.

FOOLISH, PROVINCIAL GIRL.

WHICH PILLAR GUARDIAN WOULD YOU ***BESEECH?***

THE MIND GUARDIAN, PERHAPS? OR DIMENSION? DID IT OCCUR TO YOU THEY MIGHT BE OCCUPIED WITH SENTIENCE, AND HOLDING THE SPACES AMONG AND WITHIN THE REALMS?

NO. I DO NOT BELIEVE IT ENTERED YOUR THOUGHTS.

WHAT THEN OF NATURE, CONFLICT, OR BALANCE? MIGHT YOUR TROUBLES USURP THEIR ENDEAVORS TO GOVERN THE ***VERY NATURE THAT BINDS US?*** THE CONSTANT FLUX OF POWER AND INFLUENCE OF SPIRIT?

AGAIN, ***NO.*** BEST LEAVE THEM TO THEIR PURSUITS.

THEN BESEECH THE GUARDIANS OF STATES OR DEATH! WHAT OF IT IF THEY HALT THEIR EFFORTS TO CONTROL THE PHYSICAL WORLD AND OVERSEE THE FATES OF SOULS? SURELY YOUR NEED FOR VENGEANCE IS ***MORE IMPORTANT!***

NO? ***ENERGY, THEN!***

OR ***TIME...***

TIME!

TELL ME ABOUT THE GUARDIAN OF TIME.

I AM ***MOCKING*** YOU, CHILD. CAN YOU NOT PARSE THE RIDICULE IN MY VOICE?

KRAA

THE GUARDIANS CREATED AND CONTROL THE SARAFAN. THEY ARE FRIEND TO NEITHER YOUR CAUSE NOR YOUR KIND. YOU ARE AN ABOMINATION TO THEM. A ***FLAW*** IN THE WORKINGS OF THE WORLD.

NOR ARE THEY FRIEND TO MY KIND. THE PILLARS WERE RAISED TO IMPRISON THE HYLDEN. AND EVEN IF ***MOEBIUS--***

MOEBIUS! IS ***HE*** THE ***TIME GUARDIAN?***

SLAP

HEED MY WORDS, GIRL. OF ALL THE GUARDIANS, MOEBIUS IS NOT THE ONE WHOSE PATH YOU WOULD WISH TO ***CROSS.***

HE WHO GUARDS TIME CAN ***CHANGE TIME.***

HE WHO CHANGES TIME CAN CHANGE ***THE PAST.***

AND HE WHO CAN CHANGE THE PAST CAN ***RESTORE*** MY VILLAGE... AND ***MY BELOVED.***

YOU ARE MAD TO ENTERTAIN SUCH THOUGHTS. MOEBIUS FORGES THE STREAM OF TIME, IT IS TRUE.

BUT MOEBIUS IS AS ***TREACHEROUS*** AS TIME ITSELF.

YOUR BELOVED IS GONE, CHILD. YOU MUST RELINQUISH THIS DELUSION.

HE MAY NOT POSSESS THE MEANS TO RESTORE MATHIAS, BUT SURELY HE HAS SEEN WHAT OTHERS CANNOT. HE WILL KNOW WHO CAN AID ME. MOEBIUS WILL HELP ME. I WILL CONVINCE HIM.

THE HEART OF DARKNESS ALONE COULD GRANT THE POWER YOU CRAVE. BUT FATE DOES NOT INTEND IT FOR YOU.

THE HEART OF DARKNESS? WHAT IS IT? WHERE MIGHT I ***FIND IT?***

BANISH THE THOUGHT. THE HEART IS GUARDED BY JANOS AUDRON, AND HE WOULD NEVER HELP A VAMPIRE TAINTED BY HYLDEN SORCERY.

HYLDEN SORCERY? I BEAR NO SUCH CURSE.

"HIGH ABOVE THE BRIDGE OF SACRIFICE, YOU WILL FIND ***A PORTAL*** FEW KNOW, A PORTAL THROUGH WHICH FEWER HAVE PASSED."

"A SECRET HYLDEN PORTAL BETWEEN THE MATERIAL REALM..."

"...AND THE REALM ***OF DEMONS.***"

NO? YOU CARRY THE DARK GIFT, CHILD... THE BLOOD CURSE IN ITS PUREST FORM, PASSED FROM ONE INFECTED BY A HYLDEN, NOT A VAMPIRE.

MY RAVEN INVITED YOU INTO THE MIST, YES, BUT IT WAS THE CURSE THAT GUIDED YOU HERE. YOU SENSED IT, AS ONLY THOSE TOUCHED BY HYLDEN SORCERY DO.

NOW, TO THE MATTER OF OUR BARGAIN.

I WILL RESTORE YOUR HAND, THOUGH THIS REQUIRES THAT YOU SUBMIT TO MORE HYLDEN MAGIC.

THROUGH THIS MAGIC, I WILL ALSO BESTOW UPON YOU TRUE POWER. WITH THAT TRUE POWER... ONCE YOU PASS BEYOND MY WOODS...

...YOU WILL DO SOMETHING FOR ME. THAT IS MY ***PRICE.***

IF I ***REFUSE,*** I WANDER THE MIST FOR ALL ETERNITY?

OR UNTIL I DECIDE TO RELEASE YOU.

ONCE I LEAVE THIS WOOD, WHO'S TO FORCE ME TO DO WHAT YOU ASK?

YOU WILL LEARN THAT HYLDEN MAGIC IS A MAGIC OF ***CONSEQUENCES.***

WOULD YOU RATHER LIVE OUT YOUR EXISTENCE LOST IN MY WOODS, OR WOULD YOU RATHER KEEP THE ETERNAL COMPANY OF MY HUMAN HALF IN THE DEMON REALM, KNOWING THE WAY BACK WOULD BE CLOSED TO YOU FOREVER?

≷SIGH≶

WHAT MUST I DO?

"YOU, ***ELALETH OF THORNLACH,*** WILL PASS THROUGH THIS ELDRITCH GATE."

"YOU WILL ENTER THE DEMON REALM, AND YOU WILL LIBERATE MY HUMAN SELF."

"ONCE THIS LONG-FORGOTTEN FRAGMENT OF MY BEING HAS CIRCLED THE WHEEL OF FATE, I SHALL BE FREED FROM THIS WOODED PRISON. MY ATONEMENT WILL BE COMPLETE, AND I SHALL BE RESTORED."

WHAT DANGERS, WHAT ***TERRORS,*** AWAIT ME IN THE DEMON REALM?

I CANNOT SAY WHAT AWAITS YOU THERE. WHAT I HAVE SEEN OF IT IN MY VISIONS DEFIES ACCOUNT.

HOW DO YOU PROPOSE THAT I APPROACH THIS ELDRITCH GATE? ON THE BACK OF YOUR RAVEN?

ACCEPT OUR BARGAIN. SUBMIT TO THE MAGIC... AND TO THE AGONY IT REQUIRES... AND SEE.

I... I ACCEPT.

LET IT BEGIN.

GAAHH!

!

SSSCHLLCK

WHOOOOSH

EEEAAA!

HER QUEST FOR VENGEANCE BECAME SOMETHING MORE PROFOUND.

I HAD BEGUN TO SURMISE THAT KY'SET'SYK'S SINISTER BARGAIN WAS THE REASON MY SISTER HAD BEEN UNABLE TO FIND ME UNTIL NOW...

THAT PERHAPS SHE HAD BEEN TRAPPED IN THE DEMON REALM THESE MANY CENTURIES, ENSNARED BY FATE'S CRUEL MACHINATIONS.

BUT THE AMULET REVEALED THE TRUTH. SHE WAS CHANGED. SHE HAD *EVOLVED.*

AT LAST.

I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

I GROW *TIRED* OF ENCOUNTERING STRANGERS WHO SEEM TO KNOW ME.

LET ME PASS.

HA HA HA HA HA

DO YOU *NOT* RECOGNIZE ME?

DID YOU NOT TELL KY'SET'SYK THAT YOU WOULD CONVINCE ME TO DO YOUR BIDDING?

MOEBIUS.

AND YOU ARE *ELALETH,* SISTER TO *LORD RAZIEL* OF *THORNLACH...*

...OR RATHER, YOU WERE.

I SEE THAT KY'SET'SYK HAS ONCE AGAIN PERFORMED ONE OF HIS ABERRANT SORCERIES.

WHATEVER YOU ARE NOW... PART VAMPIRE, PART HYLDEN ABOMINATION... YOU ARE CERTAINLY NO LONGER THE LADY OF THORNLACH.

YOU WISH TO INSULT ME. YET HERE YOU ARE WAITING FOR ME.

TELL ME *WHY.*

DO NOT PRESUME TO COMMAND THE *GUARDIAN OF TIME.*

SHHRRRAK

WHOOM

GAAAGHHH!

SWOOSH

ONLY WHEN YOU ARE PREPARED TO ADDRESS ME WITH PROPER RESPECT SHALL WE ENTERTAIN A DISCUSSION.

CRACKLE

UMMPH!

FZZZT

ALREADY LEARNING...

...BUT STILL A FLEDGLING.

THUD

HMPH

KY'SET'SYK WARNED ME ABOUT YOU.

HE SAID YOU AID NONE ***BUT YOURSELF.***

I ASSIST OTHERS WHEN DOING SO ALIGNS WITH MY OWN INTERESTS. IT IS NO ***SIMPLE FEAT*** TO KEEP THE STREAM OF TIME FLOWING AS IT MUST.

THEN PLEASE, O GREAT GUARDIAN OF TIME, WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, I ***BEG*** BOTH YOUR PARDON AND A FAVOR.

I KNOW WHAT FAVOR YOU WOULD ASK.

I SAW THE DESECRATION VISITED UPON YOUR VILLAGE BY THE VAMPIRE HORDE.

I WATCHED AS YOU TRIED ***IN VAIN*** TO SAVE YOUR BELOVED...

FIRST FROM THE VILE CLUTCHES OF THAT ABOMINATION, VODALUS...

AND THEN FROM THE BLADE OF YOUR BROTHER.

THESE ARE THE SORROWS YOU SEEK TO REMEDY.

THE EVENTS YOU WISH TO SEE UNDONE.

TELL ME, FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, DID THOSE HORRORS HAPPEN YESTERDAY... OR CENTURIES AGO...

IT IS HAPPENING NOW, CHILD. YOUR FATHER'S BIRTH. MATHIAS'S DEATH. ALL ACTIONS PAST, ALL ACTIONS TO COME ARE COMPREHENDED AND RECONCILED THROUGH ME.

KRAA

THEN HEAR MY PLEADING AND RECONCILE IT TO MY ***DESIRED OUTCOME!***

HA HA HA HA HA

TIME'S ARCHITECTURE IS NO TRIFLING THING...

IT DEVISES CHAMBERS FOR ALL TO DWELL IN...

SOME CHAMBERS ARE MORE PLEASANT THAN OTHERS...

BUT YOU HAVE LINGERED IN A CHAMBER THAT CONFOUNDS EVEN THE TIME GUARDIAN.

KY'SET'SYK'S DOMAIN. THE KAMBION WOODS. WITHIN ITS BOUNDARIES LIES AN ANOMALY.

THE STREAM OF TIME STILL FLOWS THERE, BUT IN ***UNNATURAL*** CURRENTS.

BEYOND MY INFLUENCE, OUTSIDE OF MY RECONCILIATION.

I SENSE THE PROFFERING OF YET ANOTHER BARGAIN IS AT HAND. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO FULFILL MY WISH?

I AM NOT CONCERNED WITH YOU.

MY INTERESTS LIE WITH ***YOUR BROTHER.***

WITH ***ME?***

I KNEW, OF COURSE, THAT MOEBIUS DESPISED VAMPIRES, AND THAT HE HELD THE VAMPIRE-HUNTING SARAFAN IN THE HIGHEST REGARD.

BUT WHAT PART DID I PLAY IN THE TIME GUARDIAN'S PLAN?

THE FORCES OF FATE AND WILL ARE LOCKED IN CONFLICT, AND YOUR BROTHER IS ENSNARED AT THE CROSSROADS.

I HAVE ALWAYS SEEN THE PATH RAZIEL MUST TREAD. LEAVING THORNLACH TO JOIN THE SARAFAN WAS MERELY ONE STEP ALONG THAT PATH.

I MUST ACT TO ENSURE HE DOES NOT STRAY...

...AND THAT HE DOES NOT TURN BACK.

TURN BACK?

TEN YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE RAZIEL SWORE THE SARAFAN OATH. HE HAS RISEN AMONG THEIR RANKS.

HE IS AN INQUISITOR NOW. A COMMANDER OF MIGHTY WARRIORS. A COMMANDER OF RESPECT.

THERE MUST BE NO OBSTACLES IN HIS PATH.

MATHIAS NEED NOT DIE FOR RAZIEL TO BECOME A SARAFAN. I DO NOT SEEK TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF MY BROTHER'S LIFE.

RETURN ME TO ***THE PAST.***

I CAN FOREWARN THE VILLAGERS. SAVE MY PARENTS. SAVE MATHIAS AND STOP RAZIEL BEFORE HE...

THE MOMENT ELALETH UTTERED MY NAME WAS THE MOMENT SHE SAW HER ERROR.

AND I, MINE.

KAIN'S ONSLAUGHT... THE BLOODSHED AT THORNLACH...

THE FORCES OF NOSGOTH HAD LONG BEEN WEAVING MY FATE. BUT WHY?

KAIN AND MOEBIUS... ETERNALLY AT ODDS, YET EACH NEEDED ME TO EMBRACE THE SARAFAN CREED.

I HAD BEGUN TO GRASP SHARDS OF THE TRUTH, YET SO MUCH REMAINED HIDDEN...

I CAN ALLOW YOU TO NEITHER PREVENT NOR INFLUENCE ANY ACTION RAZIEL MIGHT TAKE IN THE FUTURE... OR ANY HE MIGHT HAVE TAKEN IN THE PAST.

HE IS HAUNTED BY THE SIGHT OF YOU LYING BESIDE THE BODY OF HIS CLOSEST FRIEND.

HE IS TORMENTED BY HIS BELIEF THAT YOU DIED BY HIS HAND, AND THAT HE DID NOTHING TO SAVE YOU.

IF HE WERE TO DISCOVER THAT YOU YET LIVE...

...SUCH AS YOU ARE...

YOU ARE THE ONLY FAMILY HE HAS LEFT. THE ONLY TETHER THAT COULD PULL HIM OFF COURSE.

HE MUST REMAIN ***UNAWARE*** OF YOUR EXISTENCE. HE MUST NOT BE SWAYED FROM HIS DESTINY.

NO! WAIT!

I AM BOUND TO A QUEST FOR THE HERMIT! IF I FAIL, I WILL BE TRAPPED FOR AGES IN THE DEMON REALM!

THEN THIS SHALL BE A KINDNESS.

KRAA

KRAKEN

ONCE YOU HAVE BEEN INVITED INTO KY'SET'SYK'S WOOD...

THE MIST WILL FOREVER PART FOR YOU.

FEAR NOT, LADY OF THORNLACH. YOUR OWN DESTINY AWAITS.

WHEN THE MOMENT ARRIVES, FATE WILL SUMMON YOU FORTH.

YES... THE FORCES OF NOSGOTH HAD INDEED LONG BEEN WEAVING MY FATE. HOW EASILY MOEBIUS SWEPT ELALETH ASIDE... SWATTED HER LIKE A FLY, INTO A PLACE AND TIME FROM WHENCE SHE COULD NOT INTERFERE WITH HIS PLANS.

WAS MOEBIUS RIGHT TO ASSUME I WOULD FORSAKE MY SARAFAN OATH HAD I LEARNED MY SISTER LIVED?

I COULD NOT SAY FOR SURE. NOT THEN.

CLUNK

K-TANG

BUT WHAT I GLIMPSED NEXT REVEALED WHAT BECAME OF ELALETH...

AND HOW OUR PATHS CROSSED LONG BEFORE THE NIGHT SHE CAME TO MY KEEP.

NO LONGER WAS THE AMULET SHOWING ME MY SISTER'S PAST. NO LONGER DID I NEED THE AMULET TO SEE...

IT WAS AS IF THE MAGIC IT CONTAINED HAD UNSHACKLED MY MIND, LEAVING ME NO REFUGE FROM THE TRUTH OF MY OWN PAST. I WOULD BE FORCED TO CONFRONT IT... WHETHER I WISHED IT OR NOT.

HOW MANY VAMPIRES DID I SLAUGHTER TO ASCEND TO THE RANK OF INQUISITOR?

HUNDREDS? THOUSANDS? *MORE?*

DUMAH! CEASE THIS *MADNESS!* THEY ARE *INNOCENTS!*

THEY MAY BE INFECTED, RAZIEL. *CONTAMINATED.*

WE WOULD BE WISE TO LEAVE NOTHING TO CHANCE.

SHINK

I had joined the Sarafan in pursuit of justice. But what we had done... what we were destined to do again... had the taint of butchery.

At night, I dreamed of Thornlach. Of my family and my birthright.

Of all the vampire horde had taken from me.

I was haunted by waking visions of the blue demon from my youth.

What did it want? Why would it not leave me in peace?

GASP

Elaleth? You... you *live!*

CLANG

Helmets! Weapons! With me now, *brothers!*

Raziel, fall back! Let *us* handle this *creature!*

BY THE BLOOD OF JANOS AUDRON, DEAR BROTHER, *YOU SHALL PAY FOR MATHIAS'S DEATH.*

STAND DOWN, *CREATURE!*

PROTECT *RAZIEL,* MEN!

TING TING TING TING

SLASH

EEEAAAAHHH!!

VVOOOSH

CRACKLE

CRACKLE

MY SISTER LIVES. *IMPOSSIBLE.*

WHAT WAS *THAT?* DID SHE VANISH INTO THE ETHER?

NO VAMPIRE WIELDS SUCH POWER... NOT ALONE.

THEN WHAT IN NOSGOTH'S NAME DID WE JUST *WITNESS?*

THE WORK OF *JANOS AUDRON.* IT MUST BE. YOU HEARD HER INVOKE HIS NAME. HIS *FOUL SORCERY* PROTECTS HIS BROOD... BUT IT WILL NOT SPARE HIM FROM *MY WRATH.*

The amulet laid bare the true depth of Moebius's curse.

NOT AGAIN! Away with your deceits, Time Guardian!

Can't you do *ANY-THING* to *BREAK* this curse, hermit?

The wiles of Moebius exceed my power to thwart. You are ensnared... adrift upon the currents of time, without anchor, *WITHOUT DOMINION.*

Then this torment is *ETERNAL?*

Even Moebius will come to the hour of a final breath.

Even the Time Guardian is bound to a mortal coil. You will endure where he cannot. And when his scheming ends in dust, so too shall your shackles fall away. Seize upon this comfort in comfortless times.

Moebius *MUST LIVE!* Only he holds the key to returning me to Mathias. But I *CANNOT* remain his prisoner. There must be another way to break this curse.

SKKRR

Elaleth was not merely ensnared within a prison of time but *SHATTERED* across its endless stream.

Cast adrift, unmoored from any single moment, hurled ceaselessly from one era to the next. Her existence a relentless cascade through the ages.

How long had she endured this torment? How many lifetimes did she suffer, all because of the path I forced upon her?

Now I apprehended the weight of her hatred. The bitterness that festered in the wake of my folly.

How much longer must I tolerate this *CURSED FATE?!*

I WILL ***KILL*** HIM, TUREL. I WILL ***TEAR*** THE THROBBING HEART FROM HIS ***STILL-LIVING*** BODY.

A WASTED ERRAND, RAZIEL. IN THE TIME IT WOULD TAKE US TO INFILTRATE AUDRON'S RETREAT, WE COULD KILL A THOUSAND VAMPIRES JUST LIKE HIM.

THERE ARE NO VAMPIRES LIKE JANOS AUDRON. HE IS THEIR ***PROGENITOR.*** THE ROOT OF ***ALL*** OUR ***STRIFE!***

STRIFE? YES, BUT BECAUSE OF AUDRON, WE SARAFAN LIVE A LIFE OF ***PURPOSE*** AND ***GLORY!*** OF ***TRIUMPH!*** PERHAPS WE OWE HIM OUR THANKS--

SLAUGHTERING INNOCENTS IS HARDLY AN ACT OF GLORY.

I SPEAK TRULY. THAT... VAMPIRE... WAS MY ***SISTER.*** ELALETH... SHE SWORE AN OATH OF ***VENGEANCE*** AGAINST ME IN AUDRON'S NAME.

AND YOU BELIEVE THAT KILLING HIM WILL RESTORE YOUR SISTER'S HUMANITY?

THERE ARE RUMORS THAT AUDRON'S HEART CAN BRING ABOUT SUCH MIRACLES. YET EVEN IF THE RUMORS ARE FALSE, SURELY HIS DEATH CAN SEVER WHATEVER EVIL THRALL HE HOLDS OVER HER... AND THE REST OF HIS ***ABOMINABLE*** TRIBE.

PERHAPS IT CAN PUT ELALETH'S TORTURED SOUL TO ***REST.***

I DO NOT PLACE FAITH IN MIRACLES. BUT I DO BELIEVE IN SLAYING VAMPIRES. WHY NOT AUDRON? IF YOU ARE RESOLUTE IN PURSUING THIS, AND I KNOW THAT YOU ARE, THEN I MAY HAVE A MEANS TO AID YOU...

SPEAK PLAINLY, WHAT AID CAN YOU OFFER?

THE TIME GUARDIAN'S STAFF. MOEBIUS WILL PART WITH IT, I AM ***CERTAIN,*** ONCE OUR MISSION IS MADE CLEAR. I WILL MEET HIM AT THE STRONGHOLD.

LATER...

TRUE TO HIS WORD, TUREL SECURED A MOST POWERFUL WEAPON. MOEBIUS HIMSELF LENT NOT ONLY HIS FANATICAL SUPPORT TO MY MISSION, BUT ALSO HIS STAFF.

=GASP!=

IT WAS DESTINY. IN THESE FINAL MOMENTS BEFORE WHAT I BELIEVED WOULD BE MY MOST GLORIOUS ACT AS A SARAFAN INQUISITOR, THERE WAS THE BLUE DEMON...

LEADING ME TO MY FATE.

WHAT IS THAT... ***THING?***

SOME SORT OF VAMPIRE ABOMINATION.

PERHAPS IT WAS SENT TO SHOW US THE WAY. WE FOLLOW, BUT QUIETLY.

WE ARE HARD UPON AUDRON'S WRETCHED AERIE, BROTHERS. *FORTIFY YOUR COURAGE!*

THAT CREATURE DID THIS...

WHERE DID IT GO?

OUR BROTHERS MAY HAVE FALLEN, BUT THEIR SACRIFICE WILL NOT BE IN VAIN!

KLOOM

I CAN ALREADY HEAR JANOS AUDRON'S HEART BEATING ITS *LAST!*

FOLLOW ME!

THE BLUE DEMON HAD VANISHED, BUT I COULD AFFORD NO TIME TO PONDER ITS WHEREABOUTS.

BEFORE ME STOOD MY WRETCHED QUARRY.

JANOS AUDRON! STEP AWAY FROM THE SWORD. IT WILL *NOT* SAVE YOU.

YOUR FINAL HOUR DWINDLES TO ITS LAST FEW GRAINS OF SAND. SARAFAN JUSTICE HAS *FOUND YOU,* AND HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL HAVE ITS VICTORY.

THEN YOU BELIEVE AS THE OTHERS DO... THAT MY BLOODLINE ***DIES*** WITH ME?

WE ARE NOT SO FRAIL, HUMAN. YOU ***FEAR*** WHAT YOU ***DON'T*** UNDERSTAND, AND YOU DESPISE WHAT YOU FEAR.

DO NOT FLATTER YOURSELF, VAMPIRE. I NEITHER FEAR NOR DESPISE YOU. ALL YOU ARE TO ME IS A BITTER SEED FROM WHICH GREW NOTHING BUT ROT AND DEATH. I ***PITY*** YOU.

IF THAT BLACK THING BEATING INSIDE YOUR CHEST IS THE INSTRUMENT OF NOSGOTH'S SALVATION, THEN ***SO BE IT.***

HOLD HIM!

VWOOM

AAAARRGGHHH!

SHRRIIP

GRRAAHH!

1 REMEMBER NOW THE COLD PULSE I FELT IN MY HAND. THIS WAS THE ARTIFACT OF MY ATONEMENT. THE TALISMAN THAT WOULD GRANT ELALETH HER MOST DESPERATE WISH.

LOOK AT HIS ***BLACK HEART!*** HOW IT ***STILL BEATS!***

THUMP THUMP

...

THE FIEND INTENDS TO ***BURY US ALIVE.*** RAZIEL, WE MUST GET ***OUT*** OF ***HERE!***

REMEMBER THE SWORD!

RUUMMBLE

NOT ONLY DID I ONCE GRASP THE BEATING HEART OF JANOS AUDRON, BUT IT WAS I WHO RIPPED IT FROM HIS CHEST.

WHERE IS RAZIEL? I WILL NOT ASK AGAIN.

UNNGGHHH...

DO AS YOU WISH TO US, VAMPIRE. IT CHANGES ***NOTHING.*** YOUR KIND'S TIME DRAWS TO ITS CLOSE.

TIME IS MORE SUBJECTIVE THAN YOU REALIZE.

ARE YOU ***SO CERTAIN?*** RAZIEL IS ALREADY ON HIS WAY TO JANOS AUDRON'S RETREAT... TO ***KILL*** HIM.

LIES!

I SPEAK ***TRUTH.*** HE TOOK HIS BEST MEN EARLIER TODAY. THE BEAST IS LIKELY DROWNING IN HIS ***OWN BLOOD*** AT THIS ***VERY MOMENT.***

WAS IT NOT ENOUGH THAT RAZIEL TOOK MATHIAS FROM ME? NOW HE INTENDS TO ***SLAY*** THE FOREFATHER AS WELL? DOES HE BELIEVE FELL DEEDS REWARD THEMSELVES? DOES HE FEAR NO SANCTION?

HIS TRANSGRESSIONS AND BLASPHEMIES CAN ***NO LONGER*** GO ***UNPUNISHED!***

CRACKLE

CRACKLE

VOOOSH

THE SATISFACTION OF KILLING JANOS AUDRON FADED THE MOMENT WE CAME UPON OUR FALLEN BROTHERS AT BOSGARD PASS.

ELALETH'S MESSAGE WAS CLEAR. TAKING AUDRON'S HEART HAD DONE NOTHING TO REVERSE OR END THE VAMPIRE CURSE. AND AUDRON'S BOAST WAS TRUE. THEY WERE NOT SO FRAGILE.

WHAT HAVE I DONE WRONG?

THE HEART HAD CEASED BEATING. A LIFELESS RELIC, AND PROOF OF TRUE DEATH... YET AUDRON'S PROGENY STILL THRIVED.

DID MY SISTER WISH TO REMAIN THE THING SHE HAD BECOME?

≥GASP≤

HURRY, BROTHERS... INTO THE STRONGHOLD!

WE SHALL ***AVENGE*** OUR FALLEN WITHIN THESE WALLS.

LATER...

CLANG AARGH!

THUD GAAH!

CRACK NOO!

HATE AND RAGE COURSED THROUGH MY VEINS AS I LISTENED TO THE DEMON DEFEATING WHAT REMAINED OF MY BRETHREN.

AT LAST, IT FOUND ITS WAY TO THE CHAPTER HOUSE, WHERE I HAD LURED IT.

TO TRAP IT. TO *KILL* IT.

THE DEMON CARRIED *THE REAVER*... A BLADE UNMATCHED IN NOSGOTH.

IT WAS A KEYSTONE OF KAIN'S ENIGMATIC DESIGNS, A WEAPON OF UNFATHOMABLE PURPOSE.

SO, VAMPIRE. *HERE* WE *ARE.*

YOU'VE DESTROYED MY BRETHREN... AND NOW YOU'VE COME FOR *ME?*

YOU'LL FIND I AM NOT SUCH *EASY* PREY.

I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU, BUT I WILL IF I MUST. RETURN THE HEART TO ME, AND WE CAN END THIS *NOW.*

SO, YOU'VE COME TO AVENGE THAT FILTHY PARASITE AND RECLAIM HIS *FOUL HEART?*

YOU'RE A RIGHTEOUS FIEND, AREN'T YOU?

APPARENTLY, I AM.

NO, VAMPIRE. THIS IS WHERE IT ENDS, BUT YOU WON'T BE LEAVING THIS ROOM. NOW, LET'S FINISH THIS. I'LL MAKE IT MERCIFULLY QUICK.

AS YOU DID FOR *JANOS?*

NO, THAT BEAST HAD ELUDED US FOR FAR TOO LONG. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A SHAME TO END HIM TOO QUICKLY.

IT'S IRONIC REALLY, THE GREAT JANOS AUDRON TURNED OUT TO BE ***NO*** CHALLENGE AT ALL. ***THANKS TO YOU.***

DID YOU HEAR HIS ***COWARDLY SCREAMS...***

...WHEN I ***TORE*** THAT ***BLACK HEART*** OUT OF HIS ***CARCASS?***

I RENOUNCE YOU.

SHUNK

GASP

AS MY VISION FADED, I THOUGHT ONLY OF ELALETH, AND HOW I HAD FAILED HER.

LATER...

THE FINAL RESTING PLACE OF MY MORTAL SELF, KNOWN TO SO FEW, REMEMBERED BY FEWER STILL.

THE TOMB OF THE SARAFAN.

RAZIEL

SO LONG AGO... YET HERE I STAND, A WITNESS TO MY OWN MORTALITY. THE WRETCHED BLUE DEMON I FIRST BEHELD IN MY YOUTH DELIVERED THE FATAL BLOW WITH THE REAVER..

THAT CURSED BLADE, NOW MY MASTER'S PRIZED WEAPON, HAD ENDED MY LIFE.

I COULD ALMOST FEEL THE REAVER PASSING THROUGH ME ONCE MORE, AS IF FROM THE START MY DESTINY HAD BEEN CARVED BY ITS BLADE.

THUD THUD THUD

WHOOSH

ARE YOU READY TO *INVITE* ME INSIDE, *BROTHER?*

I DO NOT KNOW YET WHETHER TO TRUST YOU.

YOU HIDE YOUR WINGS. THAT IS *WISE.*

IT SEEMS *I DID TAKE* THE HEART OF JANOS AUDRON.

DID THE AMULET HELP YOU REMEMBER WHERE YOU CONCEALED IT?

DO YOU HAVE IT? IS IT *HERE?*

I REMEMBER MY HUMAN LIFE, SISTER. AND MY HUMAN DEATH.

IT IS TRUE THAT I ONCE HELD THE HEART IN MY HAND, AND THAT I HAD HOPED IT WOULD RESTORE YOUR HUMANITY, OR GIVE YOUR SOUL PEACE...

I WAS MISTAKEN.

MY HUMANITY? YOU WISHED ME TO EXCHANGE POWER FOR *WEAKNESS* AND *FRAGILITY?*

SURELY, AFTER ENDURING THESE COUNTLESS CENTURIES AS A VAMPIRE, YOU MUST SEE THE FOLLY IN LONGING TO RECLAIM A MORTAL EXISTENCE.

I WAS MISTAKEN THEN ABOUT THE HEART'S TRUE POWER. TELL ME... WHAT IS IT YOU SEEK TO DO WITH IT NOW?

THE HEART DOES NOT RESTORE HUMAN LIFE, RAZIEL...

IT RESTORES *VAMPIRIC LIFE.*

I WOULD GUIDE IT BACK THROUGH THE CURRENTS OF TIME AND RESTORE MY BELOVED MATHIAS TO THE VAMPIRIC EXISTENCE YOU DENIED HIM.

THE CURRENTS OF TIME...

THE CURSE MOEBIUS LAID UPON YOU WAS THE CONSEQUENCE OF YOUR OWN *FOOLISHNESS.*

I WAS NO FOOL... I WAS *DAMNED* TO *HIS WILL!*

HOW THEN DID YOU BREAK HIS CURSE?

I DID NOT *BREAK* IT. I *ESCAPED* IT.

"WHENEVER I TRIED TO LEAVE KY'SET'SYK'S WOOD. AND TRY I DID, AGAIN AND AGAIN, WITHOUT *END!* I WAS TORN AWAY, ONLY TO BE THRUST INTO A DIFFERENT ERA."

"AT TIMES, I LINGERED FOR DAYS. AT OTHERS, MERE FLEETING BREATHS BEFORE THE MIST RECLAIMED ME."

"THE PAST AND FUTURE WERE AS ONE. EACH TIME I THOUGHT ESCAPE WAS POSSIBLE, MY EFFORTS ONLY RETURNED ME TO THE SAME PLACE... KY'S WOOD."

"THERE WAS NO PATTERN, NO LOGIC TO MOEBIUS'S DESIGN... ONLY THE COLD HAND OF HIS *MALICE.*"

"THEN ONE DAY, KY REVEALED TO ME THAT KAIN HAD *SLAIN* MOEBIUS."

"MY HOPE OF REUNITING WITH MATHIAS, WITH MY BELOVED, WAS *SHATTERED.*"

"COULD THIS MEAN I WAS FINALLY FREE OF MOEBIUS'S CURSE? YET... WITHOUT MATHIAS, WHAT WAS FREEDOM WORTH?"

"KY WAS PLEASED MY CURSE WAS BROKEN. NOW I COULD FINALLY LEAVE HIS WOODS AND COMPLETE THE QUEST HE HAD LONG AGO MADE ME SWEAR TO ACCEPT."

"HE TOLD ME THAT EVEN THOUGH MOEBIUS NEVER SENT ME BACK TO THAT FATEFUL DAY IN THORNLACH... TO MATHIAS..."

"...THERE WAS ANOTHER WAY. AN EVENT THAT COULD FRACTURE ***TIME ITSELF.***"

"A PARADOX."

"KY PROFESSED TO KNOW LITTLE OF PARADOXES... LET ALONE HOW TO CREATE ONE."

KRAA

"ALL HE KNEW, ALL HE GUESSED, HE GATHERED FROM THE WHISPERS OF HIS SPY..."

"...AND THE INFORMATION AMOUNTED TO THIS: ONLY KAIN AND YOU, THE MIGHTY RAZIEL, COULD FORGE A PARADOX."

ONCE AGAIN, I FOUND MYSELF FORCED TO BARGAIN WITH GREAT POWER.

KAIN?

KAIN.

YOU ASKED HIM FOR A PARADOX THAT COULD ***SAVE*** MATHIAS FROM MY SWORD...

BUT BEFORE YOU GO BACK TO THAT DAY IN THORNLACH, YOU REQUIRE THE HEART OF DARKNESS. FROM ME.

I NEED JANOS AUDRON'S HEART TO ENSURE HIS RESURRECTION.

I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU... I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT IS.

WHAT I DO KNOW IS THAT YOUR PRESENCE HERE HAS ONLY MADE MY EXISTENCE MORE ARDUOUS.

WERE YOU AWARE THAT KAIN SUMMONED ME TO HIS STRONGHOLD NOT LONG AFTER I RECEIVED THESE?

WHEN I TOLD HIM I HAD BEEN VISITED BY SOMEONE CLAIMING TO BE MY SISTER, HE BECAME ***ENRAGED.***

HE COMMANDED ME TO KILL ***YOU.***

WHOOOSH

KNOWING KAIN WANTS YOU DEAD, DO YOU IMAGINE HE STILL INTENDS TO HONOR HIS BARGAIN WITH YOU?

TELL ME, WHAT DID YOU OFFER IN RETURN? WHAT ***MUST*** YOU DO OR GIVE TO EARN HIS FAVOR?

YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER.

CRACKLE

YET IF YOU DO NOT ***REMEMBER*** WHAT I TOLD YOU, PERHAPS IT IS TIME THAT I ***SHOW*** YOU...

"THE PILLARS OF NOSGOTH, ONCE THE SACRED FOUNDATION OF THIS WORLD, LAY IN RUINS, RUBBLE BENEATH THE WEIGHT OF KAIN'S CHOICE TO REJECT FATE."

"INSTEAD OF SACRIFICING HIMSELF TO RESTORE BALANCE TO THE PILLARS, KAIN CHOSE TO RULE A WORLD IN DECAY."

LORD KAIN, I SEEK AN AUDIENCE.

NOT SINCE THE AGE OF JANOS AUDRON HAVE WINGED VAMPIRES WALKED THIS LAND. ***STRANGE.*** A REMNANT OF VORADOR'S CABAL, PERHAPS? MY CURIOSITY HAS GRANTED YOU A REPRIEVE FROM DEATH... FOR NOW. ***APPROACH.***

HE DOES NOT REMEMBER ME.'

I HOPE FOR A FAVOR.

HE DOES NOT REMEMBER THE ***DEATH*** AND ***DESTRUCTION*** HE SO LONG AGO VISITED UPON MY VILLAGE.

≥SIGH≤ A FAVOR? HOW ***TEDIOUS.*** I HAD HOPED YOU WOULD CONTINUE TO SURPRISE ME.

GULP GULP

FOR CENTURIES, I HAVE SEARCHED FOR THE UNATTAINABLE.

TO RECTIFY A GRIEVOUS OFFENSE IN MY PAST.

THE THREADS OF FATE ARE DELICATE.

MOEBIUS THOUGHT HE COULD STRING THEM TAUT AS ACROSS A LUTE AND IMPOSE HIS SONG ON THEM. YET HE DIED BY MY OWN HAND.

I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT YOU TOO, LORD KAIN, ARE ALSO ABLE TO MANIPULATE TIME. I ASK--

RUMORS... THE BLEATING OF FOOLS. IRRELEVANT. BUT YOUR WINGS, THOSE WARRANT A CLOSER LOOK...

I AM THE MOST POWERFUL VAMPIRE IN EXISTENCE, YET ***NOT EVEN I*** HAVE WINGS.

*RUSTLE

I SHOULD DESTROY YOU. AND YET, YOUR PLEA STIRS MY CURIOSITY...

WILL YOU HELP ME?

HELP YOU... OR ***END YOU?*** THAT, WE SHALL SOON DISCOVER. YOU SEEK A PARADOX. THAT IS NO SMALL MATTER. YET YOU SPEAK AS THOUGH YOU UNDERSTAND THE DANGERS... AS THOUGH YOU'VE HEARD THESE THINGS BEFORE. PERHAPS ***VORADOR*** SENT YOU. HE MUST HAVE TOLD YOU WHAT BEFELL HIM THE FIRST TIME I DARED TO RESTITCH TIME'S THREADS. ANSWER ME ONE QUESTION AND I SHALL ***CONSIDER*** YOUR REQUEST.

SPEAK YOUR REQUEST.

TELL ME, FROM WHENCE DID YOUR WINGS ARISE?

I WILL TELL YOU SOMETHING FAR MORE PRECIOUS...

SUCH AS?

THE LOCATION OF A TOMB WHERE ***SIX*** SARAFAN INQUISITORS LIE.

WHAT USE TO ME ARE ***DUST*** AND ***BONES?***

NO, LORD KAIN. RESURRECT THEM. HARNESS THE STRENGTH THEY POSSESSED IN LIFE AND SHAPE THEM TO YOUR WILL. YOUR NEW LIEUTENANTS WAIT TO SHIRK OFF WRETCHED DEATH, THEIR LUNGS RENEWED AND REPURPOSED BY YOUR GENEROUS BREATH.

SHOW YOUR ENEMIES THAT EVEN THE MIGHTIEST SARAFAN WARRIORS TO HAVE EVER LIVED ARE ***SUBJECT*** TO YOUR ***DOMINION.***

AN INTRIGUING VISION. PERHAPS I WILL PURSUE IT. HOW GREAT THIS OFFENSE MUST BE TO IMPEL YOU TO SUCH LENGTHS. WHAT ***SIN*** LIES IN YOUR PAST?

WHY SHOULD I TROUBLE MYSELF WITH YOUR NEED FOR ATONEMENT?

IT IS NOT ATONEMENT I SEEK. IT IS ***REVENGE.***

REVENGE! A WORTHY GRAIL. DO YOU SEEK TO ***DRINK DEEP?***

I SEEK ONLY THAT WHICH WAS STOLEN FROM ME.

INTRIGUING... TELL ME THEN, WHERE IS THIS TOMB?

I WILL TELL YOU, BUT YOU MUST FULFILL YOUR END OF THIS BARGAIN.

A PARADOX IS NOT SOMETHING I CAN SIMPLY ***TELL YOU.*** A PARADOX MUST BE SHOWN. IT MUST BE LIVED.

THEN LET ME LIVE IT!

A PARADOX IS NOT A LAW, IT IS THE DEFIANCE OF ONE. A ***FRACTURE*** WHERE TRUTH AND LIE WALK HAND IN HAND. I'VE SEEN SUCH WOUNDS OPEN IN THE FABRIC OF TIME. I DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEM. BUT I SUSPECT... MORE THAN I SHOULD.

A FRACTURE? TELL ME HOW TO BREAK TIME, AS YOU ONCE DID?

WHEN I STRUCK DOWN WILLIAM THE JUST CENTURIES AGO, HIS BLADE CLASHED WITH MINE... THE SAME BLADE, ACROSS TIME. PAST AND PRESENT, COLLIDING IN ONE IMPOSSIBLE MOMENT. TWO TRUTHS, MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE, YET MOMENTARILY THE SAME. THE PARADOX WAS BORN.

IF I COULD TRAVEL THROUGH TIME, I WOULDN'T NEED A PARADOX.

YOUR THOUGHTS CRAWL WHERE THEY SHOULD FLY. A PARADOX IS NOT CONJURED BY MOTION ALONE. IT NEED NOT ARRIVE DRAPED IN THE TRAPPINGS OF THE FUTURE. THE PRESENT DRAGS THE PAST BEHIND IT LIKE A SHADOW. REMAIN STILL LONG ENOUGH... AND TIME ITSELF MAY RISE TO CONFRONT YOU.

WHAT LIES BENEATH YOUR SUSPICIONS, KAIN?

SWOOSH

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

THROOOOMMM

...CURIOUS...

I MEANT TO STRIKE YOU DOWN. BUT THE REAVER... IT REFUSED...

AND NOW... I FEEL SOMETHING I HAVE NOT FELT IN AN AGE.

YOU REALLY ARE A TYRANT.

TYRANT? HERO? WORDS FOR POETS. I SEEK ONLY WHAT SERVES NOSGOTH. AND TO ACHIEVE THAT, I DO WHAT MUST BE DONE. YOU, HOWEVER, MAY BE BOUND TO MY FATE IN WAYS NEITHER OF US YET GRASP.

HOW?

WHEN WILLIAM'S BLADE TOUCHED MINE, TIME BUCKLED. THE REAVER SCREAMED. BUT NOT TO ME. IT HOWLED ACROSS THE AGES. I HEAR IT AGAIN, NOW. LIKE THE LAST BREATH BEFORE A STORM.

BUT THERE IS NO OTHER REAVER HERE. NOT EVEN A SHARD.

NO. NOT EVEN A SHARD.

THEN THIS BARGAIN IS HOLLOW. I HAVE ENDURED YOUR POSTURING, YOUR RIDDLES... AND ALL I RECEIVE IS AN ATTEMPTED EXECUTION AND VAGUE RIDDLES? I'VE EARNED MORE THAN THIS.

YOU WANT PAYMENT? ***TAKE IT.***

YOU... YOU WOULD ***GIVE*** IT TO ME?

LET US SEE WHAT HAPPENS.

I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND. IT CALLS TO ME, BUT... THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING IS SCREAMING INSIDE ME. I-I CAN'T TAKE IT.

FASCINATING.

YOU'VE SEEN MORE TONIGHT THAN MOST GLIMPSE IN A LIFETIME. AND YET, THE SHAPE OF IT ALL STILL ELUDES YOU. I WILL SHOW YOU MORE, BUT FIRST, THE TOMB...

VERY WELL. IT IS HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT. SURELY YOU HAVE SEEN IT, YET YOU DEEMED THE INTERRED DEAD OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE AND DID NOT EXPLORE. TO FIND IT, JOURNEY WEST, TOWARD THE LAKE OF TEARS...

NOW, BROTHER, PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO WHAT THE AMULET WILL SHOW YOU. IT IS NOT EVERYONE WHO GETS TO WITNESS THEIR OWN ***BIRTH.***

"WITHIN THE CANYONS, CUT INTO THE WALLS OF THE CLIFFS, YOU'LL FIND THE ***SEPULCHER.***"

"VENTURE FORTH AT THE HOUR OF VEILS. WHEN THE NIGHT IS AT ITS ***DARKEST,*** HARNESS YOUR ***UMBRAL SIGHT*** TO UNVEIL A PATH UNSEEN BY MORTAL EYES."

SHIIIIFFT

VWHOOSH

FLAP

FLAP

FLAP

"FROM HERE, THE TRAIL IS MOST EASILY FOLLOWED FROM A GREAT HEIGHT."

SHIIIFFT

THE SCENT OF MORTAL FLESH...

CRACKLE

VAMPIRE!

A PILGRIM WHO WISHES TO PAY HOMAGE AT THE TOMB OF THE INQUISITORS. THE SARAFAN SYMBOL ON YOUR CLOAK BETRAYS YOUR ***BLASPHEMOUS ALLEGIANCE!***

THE INQUISITORS WERE ***MIGHTY*** AND ***JUST!*** THEY KILLED VERMIN LIKE YOU AND ONE DAY WILL RISE TO BATTLE ***ONCE MORE!***

IN THIS ALONE YOU ARE RIGHT. THE ***DEAD*** SHALL ***RISE.***

SWIISH

SCHING

CLANG

SCHLCK

AAARGH!

THUMP

SLUURP

YOUR ***BLOOD*** NOW SERVES A GREATER PURPOSE.

WHOOOOSH

A PRIDEFUL INQUISITOR SEPULCHER.

THEY INSCRIBE THEIR *ARROGANCE* IN STONE.

I SHALL ENJOY DESECRATING THIS HALLOWED PLACE.

HERE SLEEP THEIR MIGHTIEST *CHAMPIONS.*

ZEPHON

MALEK

MELCHIAH

RAZIEL

THEY HAVE RESTED *LONG* ENOUGH.

RAHAB.

SCRAAATCH

DUMAH

TUREL

SKRRRTCH

MALEK

MELCHIAH

RAZIEL...

JANOS AUDRON'S GREATEST MORTAL FOE SHALL RESURRECT AS MY MOST DEVOTED LIEUTENANT.

GRRROAN

SLICE

SPLISH

MY BLOOD, SUFFUSED WITH ANCIENT POWER...

HISSSSS

...AWAKENS THE DEAD AND BINDS THEM TO MY WILL.

I RESURRECT YOU WITH THIS VAMPIRIC GIFT AND BAPTIZE YOU IN THE ESSENCE OF MY VERY SOUL.

SNAP

GASP

RISE, RAZIEL, MY FIRSTBORN.

RISE AND SERVE.

DRINK.

I IMBUE YOU WITH RENEWED PURPOSE, RAZIEL.

TOGETHER, WITH YOUR BRETHREN, WE SHALL BEND NOSGOTH TO OUR WILL.

I'VE WALKED THIS WORLD FOR A MILLENNIA. WHY COME TO ME NOW WHEN ***YOU*** WERE THERE FROM THE BEGINNING?

BY THE TICKING OF MORTAL CLOCKS, THE ENDLESSNESS OF MOEBIUS'S TIME-PRISON CAST ME BETWEEN THE SHATTERED EPOCHS OF NOSGOTH FOR MILLENNIA. EVEN AFTER I ***TORE FREE*** AND FOUND KAIN, HE GAVE ME ***NOTHING.*** SO I TURNED TO KY, SEEKING ANOTHER PATH THAT MIGHT DRIVE KAIN TOWARD A PARADOX. BUT KY'S WOODS DO NOT OBEY THE RULES OF TIME.

IT DOES NOT MATTER. EVERYTHING I AM OR WAS... BROTHER, SARAFAN, VAMPIRE... ***DERIVES FROM YOU.***

FROM KAIN! HE ***ATTACKED*** OUR VILLAGE. HE ***RESURRECTED*** YOU. YES, KAIN, WHO YOU HAVE SERVED FOR A THOUSAND YEARS WITH ***MINDLESS DEVOTION!***

LIKE A HOUND ON A LEASH, YOU ***GROVELED*** FOR SCRAPS UNDER YOUR MASTER'S TABLE.

BLIND TO THE TRUTH OF HIS AMBITION. BLIND TO ***THE TRUTH*** OF ***YOUR OWN PAST.***

YOU TRADED MY ***BODY AND SOUL*** TO KAIN IN SERVICE OF YOUR ***OWN AMBITION!***

YOUR OWN DESIRES!

CRAACK

WHY DID KAIN HIDE FROM ME THE TRUTH OF WHO I WAS?

FROM THE MOMENT YOU STRUCK MATHIAS'S HEAD FROM HIS BODY TO THE MOMENT YOU TORE THE HEART FROM JANOS AUDRON'S CHEST...

YOU WERE ALWAYS AN ***EXECUTIONER...***

...AND YOU ARE AN EXECUTIONER ***STILL.***

THAT IS ALL THAT MATTERED TO KAIN WHEN HE RAISED YOU FROM DEATH, AND IT IS ALL THAT MATTERS TO HIM ***NOW.***

YOU REVEL IN YOUR VAMPIRIC GIFT! IF YOU WERE GIVEN THAT CHOICE NOW, WOULD YOU ***REFUSE*** IT?

WOULD YOU RATHER YOU WERE BONES AND DUST, UNDISTURBED IN A SILENT TOMB?

YOU WOULD NOT!

OR CONSIDER THIS.

WHEN AT LAST I AM GRANTED MY PARADOX... WHEN AT LAST I STAND ONCE AGAIN IN THORNLACH...

SHALL I SAVE YOU AS WELL? SHALL I CREATE A WORLD IN WHICH YOU WERE NEVER SARAFAN? NEVER VAMPIRE? NEVER KAIN'S ***PUPPET?***

NEVER AN ***EXECUTIONER?***

ANSWER ME, ***RAZIEL!***

YOU HAVE A CHOICE.

I FIX MY GAZE ON THE FORWARD PATH ALONE.

AFTER ALL THAT I HAVE SHOWN YOU...

AFTER EVERYTHING YOU NOW REMEMBER...

YOU STILL CHOOSE THE BLOOD OF KAIN OVER THE BLOOD OF KIN?

JOIN ME, SISTER, IN SERVICE TO KAIN. NOW THAT YOU HAVE ESCAPED MOEBIUS'S CURSE, YOU ALSO HAVE A CHOICE.

KAIN WOULD WELCOME YOUR ALLEGIANCE. WE WOULD SHARE COMMON PURPOSE. YOUR LONESOMENESS MIGHT FIND A BALM.

WITH OUR MIGHTY WINGS, THE HEAVENS THEMSELVES WILL BEND TO OUR WILL.

AND WE WOULD BEND TO ***KAIN'S!***

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS KAIN WHO ***SLAUGHTERED*** OUR PARENTS?

YET IT IS ***ONLY MATHIAS*** WHOSE LIFE YOU WISH TO SAVE.

WHAT OF OUR MOTHER AND FATHER?

YOUR CHILDHOOD, BROTHER, WAS ***SIMPLE.*** EVERYONE IN THE MANOR, IN THE ENTIRE FORSAKEN VILLAGE, EXISTED TO ENSURE THAT YOUNG LORD RAZIEL OF THORNLACH WAS CONTENT.

THAT HE WANTED FOR ***NOTHING.***

YOU WITNESSED NO HARDSHIP AS A CHILD... NOT EVEN THAT OF THOSE CLOSEST TO YOU.

AND YOU? WHAT HARDSHIP DID YOU ***ENDURE?***

FATHER LOVED ONLY YOU. HIS SON, HIS FIRSTBORN, HIS HEIR. WHEN I WAS BARELY SIX, I OVERHEARD HIM CHASTISE MOTHER FOR HAVING GIVEN BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER. TO ***ME.***

HIS WISH WAS TO EXPAND THE BOUNDARIES OF HIS LANDS, TO BUILD A SECOND MANOR, AND A THIRD, AND FOURTH, HIS LEGACY SECURED BY A LINE OF SONS.

OF COURSE, HE NEVER GOT THAT CHANCE.

I WAS AN ENCUMBRANCE.

I STAYED CLOSE TO YOU, RAZIEL. I CLUNG TO YOUR SHADOW BECAUSE YOU WERE KIND TO ME.

BECAUSE I LOVED YOU.

YOU AND MATHIAS WERE MY FAMILY. ***MY WORLD.***

THEN YOU TOOK HIM FROM ME...

AND I SAW YOU FOR WHAT YOU REALLY WERE. IN THE MOMENT, WITH ONE STROKE OF YOUR SWORD...

I LOST YOU ***BOTH.***

ELALETH... I... I AM SORRY.

I DO NOT KNOW WHERE THE HEART OF DARKNESS LIES. THEREFORE, YOU CANNOT COMPLETE YOUR QUEST.

STAY HERE. WITH ME.

HAVE YOU LISTENED TO NOTHING I HAVE SAID?

I DO ***NOT*** FORGIVE YOU, RAZIEL.

EVEN WITHOUT THE HEART, I MUST GO BACK. BY WHATEVER MEANS, I WILL SAVE MATHIAS.

BUT YOUR ***WINGS...***

WHAT OF THEM?

YOU ARE BOUND BY ANOTHER QUEST. YOU SWORE BEFORE THE HERMIT ***KY'SET'SYK*** THAT YOU WOULD FLY THROUGH THE HYLDEN PORTAL ABOVE THE BRIDGE OF SACRIFICE...

THAT YOU WOULD ENTER THE ***DEMON REALM*** AND RETURN WITH HIS HUMAN HALF.

ONCE I LEAVE THIS WOOD, ***WHO'S*** TO FORCE ME TO DO WHAT YOU ASK?

YOU WILL LEARN THAT HYLDEN MAGIC IS A MAGIC OF ***CONSEQUENCES.***

WOULD YOU RATHER LIVE OUT YOUR EXISTENCE LOST IN MY WOODS, OR WOULD YOU RATHER KEEP THE ETERNAL COMPANY OF MY HUMAN HALF IN THE DEMON REALM, KNOWING THE WAY BACK WOULD BE CLOSED TO YOU FOREVER?

"I ESCAPED THE CURSE OF MOEBIUS..."

"I ESCAPED THE STREAM OF TIME..."

"AND I ESCAPED KY'SET'SYK'S WOOD."

I AM BEYOND THE HYLDEN HERMIT'S REACH. HOW FOOLISH TO GO WILLINGLY TO THE DEMON REALM AFTER HE THREATENED TO ENSNARE ME THERE FOR ETERNITY.

ONCE I AM GRANTED MY PARADOX, I WILL EXIST IN A TIME WHERE I NEVER CHANCED TO MEET KY'SET'SYK.

OUR BARGAIN WILL NOT EXIST.

IT IS YOU WHO ARE FOOLISH.

YOU FORGET THAT I, TOO, HAVE NOW TASTED HYLDEN MAGIC. THE HERMIT SPOKE TRULY. CONSEQUENCES, NO MATTER THEIR PROVENANCE, HAVE A WAY OF PAYING THOSE WHO HAVE EARNED THEM.

I KNOW THAT NOW.

HOW CAN YOU EVADE YOUR BARGAIN WITH KY'SET'SYK ***AND YET*** EXPECT KAIN TO UPHOLD HIS BARGAIN WITH YOU?

I HAVE DONE ONLY WHAT WAS NECESSARY TO RESHAPE MY PAST.

NEITHER MY CHOICES NOR MY CONSEQUENCES ARE YOUR CONCERN.

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED, SISTER, THAT PERHAPS YOU ARE THE REASON KAIN ***DESTROYED THORNLACH?*** THAT YOU ARE THE REASON SO MANY INNOCENTS PERISHED THAT DAY BY THE SWORDS AND FANGS OF VAMPIRES?

"TIME IS BOTH WICKED AND INDIFFERENT. IT TUMBLES YOU ONE INSTANT LIKE A LEAF IN A GALE AND ENTOMBS YOU THE NEXT LIKE A SPIDER IN AMBER."

THAT IS WHAT YOU TOLD ME.

MIGHT TIME NOT ALSO BE A COILED SERPENT THAT DEVOURS ITS OWN TAIL?

IS IT NOT POSSIBLE THAT KAIN CAME TO OUR VILLAGE THAT DAY FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN TO CREATE YOUR PARADOX?

PERHAPS TIME ALSO FLOWS IN A CIRCLE, AND YOUR DESIRE TO CHANGE THE PAST IS THE VERY THING THAT INCITED THE TRAGEDY YOU WISH TO CHANGE.

EVEN IF TIME WERE TO SPIRAL BACK UPON ITSELF, YOU, RAZIEL, WOULD REMAIN AT ITS CENTER.

IT WAS ***ALWAYS YOU*** AT THE CENTER.

BOTH KAIN AND MOEBIUS *MANIPULATED* YOUR DESTINY FROM ***THE BEGINNING.***

EACH HAD HIS OWN MOTIVE FOR LEADING YOU INTO THE SERVICE OF THE SARAFAN.

AND HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN?

YOU ARE THE VERY REASON I WAS ***CURSED*** BY MOEBIUS! HE FEARED YOU WOULD ABANDON THE PATH HE SET FOR YOU, ***HAD YOU KNOWN I STILL LIVED.***

EVERY MISFORTUNE ***IN MY LIFE,*** RAZIEL...

...IS BECAUSE ***OF YOU!***

I DO ***NOT WISH*** TO--

RRAAHH!

CLANG

WHOOSH

CLANG

YEAAARGH!

THUD

AGH!

WHAM

WHOOSH

SWISH

THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOUR OWN *SACRIFICE.*

SHINK

GAAH!

I DID NOT WISH FOR THINGS TO END *THIS WAY.*

THEN CHOOSE A DIFFERENT PATH. *I'VE SHOWN YOU--*

I HAVE SEEN ONLY WHAT THE ARTIFACT HAS REVEALED, AND YOU ASK ME TO ACCEPT IT AS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH.

YET STILL YOU TRUST KAIN.

IS IT NOT CURIOUS? THE FIRST TIME YOU LAY EYES ON ME, A VAMPIRE WITH ***WINGS,*** AND NOW YOU POSSESS WINGS OF YOUR OWN. THEY ARE NO COINCIDENCE... *NO MERE GIFT.*

IF YOU ARE THE CAUSE OF THEIR MANIFESTATION, THEN THEY ARE NOT A GIFT, BUT A SCOURGE.

NO, RAZIEL. YOUR WINGS ARE A GIFT. I COUNSELED YOU NOT LONG AGO TO KEEP THEM A SECRET FROM YOUR MASTER. I SPOKE OUT OF ***ENVY.***

IMAGINE WHAT HEIGHTS KAIN WILL RAISE YOU TO IF YOU ***REVEAL*** THEM TO HIM. SURELY, HE WILL INVITE YOU TO RULE BESIDE HIM...

I KNEW THAT KAIN WOULD VENERATE YOU. I KNEW BY THE WAY HE FIRST BEHELD MY WINGS... WITH REVERENCE AND RESPECT.

I KNEW THAT IF HE SAW YOUR WINGS, HIS REGARD FOR YOU WOULD EXCEED ALL LIMIT.

AND I GREW *EMBITTERED.*

YOU HAVE BESTED ME, RAZIEL. I HAVE NO REASON TO LIE TO YOU.

SHOW HIM, RAZIEL. SHOW KAIN ***WHAT*** YOU HAVE ***BECOME!***

LATER...

I HAVE BESTED MY SISTER IN COMBAT.

YET WHY DO I FEAR THAT, EVEN NOW, SHE IS DEFEATING ME?

THE SANCTUARY OF CLANS... SEAT OF MY LORD'S POWER. KAIN, THE BEAT OF MY ZEALOUS HEART HERALDS MY COMING. MAKE READY TO RECEIVE YOUR MOST DEVOUT SON.

FOR CENTURIES, WE HAVE BEEN SPECTERS IN EACH OTHER'S WAKE, SHIFTING BETWEEN THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN, BOUND BY THE TIDE OF FATE.

THUMP

KRAA

WATCH CLOSELY, FLIGHTED BROTHER.

BUT NOW, THE SHROUD OF TIME IS SUNDERED, AND WE STAND EXPOSED IN THIS SINGULAR RECKONING.

THIS RELIC HAS LET ME GAZE UPON MY PAST.

IF ONLY IT COULD NOW AFFORD ME EVEN A SECOND OF FORESIGHT.

ELALETH HAS REVERSED HER COUNSEL.

WHAT GROUND DOES SHE STAND TO GAIN IF I CONTINUE TO HIDE MY WINGS...

...OR LOSE IF I CHOOSE TO REVEAL THEM?

SCHEME FOLLOWS SCHEME, UNTIL ALL IS TWISTED AND CONFUSED. BUT STILL I CHART A STRAIGHT COURSE...

KAIN *WILL* SEE MY WINGS.

HOW COULD HE SEE ME AS ANYTHING BUT A WORTHY ALLY?

I AM RAZIEL, FIRST-BORN OF HIS LIEUTENANTS.

I STOOD WITH KAIN AND MY BRETHREN AT THE DAWN OF THE EMPIRE.

I HAVE SERVED HIM A MILLENNIUM.

CHANGE HAS ALWAYS BEEN INEVITABLE.

OVER TIME, WE BECAME LESS HUMAN AND MORE... *DIVINE.*

KAIN WOULD ENTER HIS OWN STATE OF CHANGE AND EMERGE WITH A NEW GIFT.

SOME YEARS AFTER THE MASTER, OUR EVOLUTION WOULD FOLLOW.

MY TRANSFORMATION IS A TESTAMENT TO HIS DARK GIFT. THIS IS WHAT HE SHAPED ME TO BECOME.

KAIN KNOWS THE DEPTHS OF MY *LOYALTY.*

I OFFER MY BECOMING, MY EVOLUTION...

...IN *SERVICE* TO MY *MASTER.*

RRRAAAAHHHH!
RAGGNN

LATER...

NO...

THIS CANNOT BE!

KAIN!

CAST HIM IN.

YOU, RAZIEL, WILL SUFFER THE FATE OF TRAITORS AND WEAKLINGS.

YOU'LL BURN FOREVER IN THE BOWELS OF THE LAKE OF THE DEAD!

KRAA

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGH

TINK

SWOOP

UNFINISHED BUSINESS FLEES ON THE HORIZON.

FLAP

FLAP

FLAP

VWHOOSH

Time ceases to exist.

I feel my memories slipping away with the withering of my flesh.

CENTURIES LATER...

Only this torture remains.

THE ABYSS STIRS...

RAZIEL, YOU ARE WORTHY...

YET THE PRESENT ENDURES...

KRAA

WHA--?

THAP

RAZIEL WORE THIS ONLY YESTERDAY. HOW DID YOU COME TO POSSESS IT?

WITHOUT THE AMULET, HIS PAST WILL SLIP INTO THE VOID ONCE MORE. HE WILL REMEMBER NOTHING... NOT EVEN ME.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

THUMP

HAHAHA!

KRAA

SOMETHING... DREADFUL... HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.

HASN'T IT?

KRAA

KRAA

FLAP

FLAP

FLAP

FLAP

FLAP

FLAP

MY AMULET. I GAVE IT TO RAZIEL.

I KNOW NOTHING OF IT, LADY ELALETH.

I'VE COME TO DISCUSS OUR BARGAIN. TELL ME, HOW MUCH TIME HAS PASSED SINCE WE LAST SPOKE OF IT?

BUT THEN, TIME MEANS SOMETHING QUITE DIFFERENT TO ONE CURSED BY MOEBIUS.

YOU'VE YET TO THANK ME FOR KILLING THE TIME GUARDIAN. YOU OWE YOUR FREEDOM TO ME.

WHAT DID YOU ***DO*** TO ***RAZIEL?***

THE BRIDGE OF SACRIFICE. HOW ***APPROPRIATE.***

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN SACRIFICE IS ***NECESSARY.*** WHEN ONE LIFE MUST BE GIVEN TO MAKE POSSIBLE... ***ANOTHER LIFE.***

GIVEN?

OR ***TAKEN?***

IRONIC THAT YOU WERE NOT WILLING TO SACRIFICE ***YOURSELF*** TO SAVE ALL OF ***NOSGOTH!***

TELL ME WHAT YOU DID!

ONLY WHAT YOU KNEW I WOULD DO. I HAVE DELIVERED YOU THE VENGEANCE YOU WERE TOO WEAK TO TAKE YOURSELF.

AND FOR THE ADDED INSOLENCE OF HIS WINGS, I HAD HIM CAST DOWN INTO THE ***LAKE OF THE DEAD!***

THAT WAS THE PATH HE WAS ***DESTINED*** TO TREAD. THE BURDEN HE WAS FATED TO BEAR TO PRESERVE OUR KIND.

IN TIME, ***ALL*** WILL UNDERSTAND.

THIS CANNOT BE... YET I SENSE KAIN SPEAKS THE TRUTH.

DELIVERED ME MY VENGEANCE? I WISHED ONLY TO CAUSE STRIFE BETWEEN RAZIEL AND KAIN.

I WISHED THAT KAIN WOULD REJECT RAZIEL. BANISH HIM. BUT NOT LIKE THIS.

I WISHED TO LEAVE MY BROTHER WITH NO OPTION OR ALLY ***EXCEPT*** ME.

I UNDERESTIMATED THE DEPTH OF KAIN'S JEALOUSY AND HUBRIS...

...AND NOW RAZIEL LIES DEAD AT THE BOTTOM OF AN UNFATHOMABLE ABYSS.

RAZIEL NEVER DELIVERED THE ONE THING YOU NEEDED. YOU NEVER PROCURED THE HEART OF DARKNESS.

HOW DO YOU KNOW? PERHAPS I POSSESS IT NOW!

RAZIEL TOLD YOU THE TRUTH. HE NEVER KNEW THE LOCATION OF JANOS AUDRON'S HEART.

NOW, DO YOU STILL WISH TO ALTER YOUR PAST, LADY OF THORNLACH? OR IS THAT TOO LIKE VENGEANCE... SOMETHING YOU'RE TOO WEAK TO PURSUE ON YOUR OWN?

ENOUGH OF YOUR PRATTLE, KAIN. I WILL SHOW YOU ***WEAKNESS!***

CLANG

YOU WOULD WAR AGAINST ME, CHILD?

SUCH FIRE. PITY RAZIEL'S LAST BREATH LACKED THE SAME RESOLVE.

RRARGH!

SHRIIK

DOES HIS SOUL WHISPER TO YOU NOW, LADY ELALETH? DOES HE CURSE MY NAME... OR ***YOURS?***

SLASH

AAGHH!

YOU KEPT A SECRET FROM ME, LADY. WHEN YOU FIRST SOUGHT MY HELP AT THE NINE PILLARS.

WHAT SECRET?

THAT YOU ARE BOUND TO RAZIEL BY BLOOD. THAT YOU ARE HIS SISTER.

WHAT DOES OUR KINSHIP MEAN TO ***YOU?***

PERHAPS NOTHING.

PERHAPS EVERYTHING.

THRRUUM
THE BLADE RESISTS!
AS IF IT POSSESSES A WILL OF ITS OWN.
IT MATTERS NOT. MY WILL IS STRONGER!
YEERGH!
FROM THE MOMENT I FIRST LAID EYES ON YOU IN THORNLACH, I KNEW WHAT YOU WERE. THE MONSTER WHO PAINTED MY HOME IN BLOOD AND LEFT MY BROTHER AND I ORPHANED. I HAVE HATED YOU EVER SINCE.
AH, THORNLACH... THEN THAT IS WHERE IT MUST BEGIN. CURIOUS HOW FATE WHISPERS THROUGH YOUR BITTERNESS. YOU SPEAK OF A PAST I HAVE YET TO MAKE, AND YET HERE YOU STAND, SHAPED BY IT. PERHAPS THAT NIGHT WAS NOT CRUELTY, BUT NECESSITY. A GENESIS YET TO BE FORGED. IF HATRED BROUGHT YOU TO THIS MOMENT, THEN PERHAPS IT WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO. NOT AS A VICTIM... BUT AS AN INSTRUMENT OF MY WILL.
SPLUTCH
AAAAAAAAAAHHH

YOU SAID YOU'D SHOW ME WEAKNESS. THANK YOU FOR THE DEMONSTRATION.

RUMBLE

WHAT IS *THIS?*

RUUMM

MBLE

I CAN FEEL IT...

TIME ITSELF *SHIFTS* BENEATH MY FEET!

CENTURIES, MILLENNIA, BREAKING INTO SHARDS, *REMAKING* THEMSELVES INTO A *NEW HISTORY* THAT HAS NEVER BEEN...

"...YET THAT HAS *ALWAYS* BEEN."

"IN THAT MOMENT, I UNDER-STOOD."

"SOMEHOW, THE REAVER PIERCING MY FLESH WAS THE KEY."

"MY BODY AND THIS WEAPON... THESE WERE THE FORCES THAT COULD *REWRITE* HISTORY."

"AND NOW, BY STRIKING ME DOWN..."

"...KAIN HAD UNWITTINGLY GIVEN ME..."

"...*EXACTLY* WHAT I SOUGHT..."

SHENK

...A PARADOX.

THE WARP OF TIME AND WEFT OF FATE WEAVE A NEW TAPESTRY.

YET SOME THREADS CANNOT BE UNDONE.

SOME, IT SEEMS, ARE WOVEN TOO TIGHTLY INTO THE VERY FABRIC OF ***ETERNITY.***

"***MATHIAS...*** MY BELOVED..."

"I COULD NOT SAVE YOU."

SLEEP. I SHALL NOT AWAKEN YOU.

RAZIEL, I AM SORRY.

AT LAST, YOU HAVE ABANDONED YOUR SENSELESS PURSUIT OF THE PAST.

KY'SET'SYK?

NOW YOU ARE READY TO BECOME WHAT I ***MADE*** YOU TO BE.

HOW CAN THIS BE?

KAIN STILL WANTS TO BE RID OF YOU. WHETHER YOU LIVE IN A DIFFERENT TIME OR DIE IN THIS ONE, HE IS GRANTED HIS WISH.

WHAT DO YOU ***GLEAN*** FROM THAT KNOWLEDGE?

THAT... THAT I WAS A THREAT TO HIM.

TO HIS EMPIRE.

NOT WAS.

ARE.

RAZIEL'S FATE REMAINS UNFINISHED. THERE IS MORE HE IS DESTINED TO DO.

AND IT IS IN KAIN'S INTEREST, WHATEVER HIS REASONS, TO KEEP YOU AND YOUR BROTHER APART.

IT IS TOO LATE FOR ME. KAIN IS THE VICTOR.

I AM DYING.

NO, LADY ELALETH. NOT TODAY. *TODAY...*

THE DEAD SHALL RISE.

VVVRRRZZZZZZ

SHRRAKTZ

ZZRAK

WHAT *BLASPHEMY* IS *THIS?*

RISE, ELALETH. YOU ARE A CHILD OF *HYLDEN MAGIC.*

HYLDEN SORCERY? HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

I HAVE WAITED PATIENTLY WHILE YOU SOUGHT *VENGEANCE.*

NOW... YOU TRANSCEND.

YOUR TRUE JOURNEY, ELALETH, BEGINS IN THE *DEMON REALM.*

YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

THIS IS BUT THE BEGINNING, CHILD.

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN WITH YOU, LADY OF THORNLACH.
IT IS BECAUSE OF YOU THAT I--
HAVE BECOME A FORCE UNMATCHED, MY MASTER'S GREATEST CHAMPION.

YOUR MASTER?
KY'SET'SYK.
KY IS YOUR MASTER?
YES, HE SET ME TO WATCH OVER YOU FROM THE TIME YOU WERE BUT A CHILD. I HAVE BEEN WITH YOU, THROUGH ALL THINGS.

THE WHITE-FEATHERED RAVEN...

NOW, YOU MUST TREAD WHERE I CANNOT FOLLOW. I AM BOUND TO KY, AND AS SUCH, I AM BARRED FROM THE DEMON REALM.
GO, AND FULFILL YOUR VOW. TAKE THE AMULET. KY'SET'SYK WILL LEAD YOU THROUGH THE TRIALS TO COME.

FIND MY HUMAN HALF, AS YOU SWORE TO LONG AGO, AND ONCE I AM FULLY RESTORED...
YOUR TRUE DESTINY SHALL BE REVEALED.

WHERE ARE YOU HIDING, LITTLE LADY ELALETH? LITTLE LORD RAZIEL? YOUR PATHS UNFOLD, AND I AM HERE TO GUIDE THE FIRST STEPS. FATE BEGINS ***NOW.***

JUAN JAMO

DESTINY LOOPS AGAIN, FOR THE FIRST TIME...

END

WITNESS RAZIEL'S BRETHREN FALL INTO RUIN.

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